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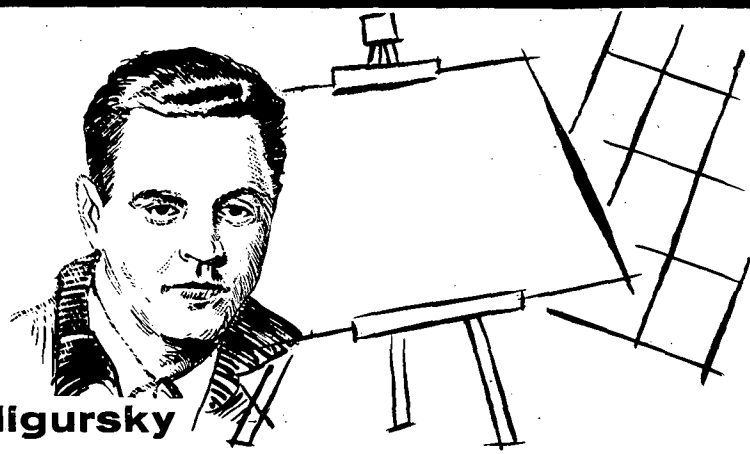
PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST



Ed Valigursky

Ed Valigursky is a paradox. So much so that he might well be called a deliberate young man in a hurry. At the age of 17—in late 1943—he considered the situation and decided, characteristically, to get his military training over and done with. So, without waiting for Uncle Sam to crook the finger, Ed joined the Navy and served through to 1946.

This obligation met, he put on civvies and held another pondering session, during which he asked himself—What kind of a career do I want? Mind you, he didn't ask—What am I best fitted for? What would be the easiest? Or, how can I make the most money? The only question in his mind was—What do I *want* to do?

He decided on art and signed up at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, commuting back and forth from his home in New Kensington, Pennsylvania. But if Ed had decided to build bridges, write novels, open a brokerage house, or almost anything else you get the feeling—after knowing him a while—he would have succeeded equally well. This because of his remarkable determination and an ability to concentrate that is given to few people.

Ed finished his art course and headed —as do most young hopefuls in his chosen field—towards O. Henry's fabulous "Bagdad on the Hudson", New York City.

(*Continued on third cover*)

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BY THE EDITOR

This department is in the process of creating a brand new magazine and thereby hangs a tale of chaos; or at least so it seems here in the office. *Creating* is exactly the right word because PEN PALS, this new mag is completely different from anything ever published. Thus we have no existing format to use as a guide.

PEN PALS is in a sense, a cooperative venture. Involved are the folks in this office and fifteen hundred other people—those whose names appear in the book. The magazine's motto is "Friendship Through Correspondence" and our fifteen hundred partners are people of all ages from twelve to eighty-eight; persons in all walks of life from kids collecting match covers to professors theorizing on supersonics.

But they all have one thing in common—they want to expand their friendships through correspondence. We believe many, many other people wish to do the same thing and PEN PALS will succeed or fail on this belief.

The editorial problems involved in the creation of this magazine were unique or perplexing. Were we going to issue a book of names remindful of a business directory? In that case it would hardly be a magazine, so the editorial content had to become a part of the overall format and a problem we wrestled with for many weeks.

And always there was the cheerful verdict of advisers, well-wishers, and friends: *You've got a swell idea but if the book could be created, someone would have done it long ago, so why don't you just forget it and put out a nice detective story magazine?*

We're frank in admitting that at times we were tempted to do just that. These ideas usually came at the end of a

(Continued on page 87)

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fantastic

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CONTENTS

THE MUMMY TAKES A WIFE
By Clyde Mitchell 6

DEATH RATTLE
By O. H. Leslie 23

THE FIFTH STONE
By Alfred Coppel 28

COWARD'S DEATH
By Ivar Jorgensen 46

CHOKE CHAIN
By Robert Silverberg 58

THE CHIMP
By Henry Slesar 78

MAN OF MANY BODIES
By Ralph Burke 96

DEPARTMENTS

LOW MAN ON THE ASTEROID
By The Editor 3

ACCORDING TO YOU
By The Readers 88

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Isaac Newton

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THE MUMMY TAKES A WIFE

By CLYDE MITCHELL

Luscious Linda was the kind of gal to make a mummy kick a hole in his sarcophagus. And there was the Belt of Osiris. It made old men young and young men—well anyhow, Linda spent all her time running until the mummy — oops! Don't want to give it away!

CAPTAIN HUMPHREY BOGGS, master of the luxury liner *Queen Victoria*, folded his hands over his paunch and looked at his two guests.

"I'm afraid I do not see the reason for all this—ah—secrecy, Dr. Armitage," he said to the older of the two men. "If the Egyptian government has given its permission for the—ah—relics to be taken out of Egypt, what is there to fear?"

Dr. Armitage fussily adjusted his *pince-nez* spectacles. "Well, Captain, the Egyptian government warned us that there is a group of fanat-

Suddenly there were

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screams, flashing swords, and a fast-vanishing mummy.

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ics who are very determined to keep the jewels and the mummy of Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III in Egypt. We think, Dr. Bingham and I, that we have thus far safely eluded the fanatics, but we do not wish them to discover our whereabouts."

"Exactly," said Dr. Bingham. He was a much younger man than Armitage, with light, sandy hair, a rather solemn expression, and blue eyes that had a look of virgin innocence about them.

"I see." Captain Boggs rose to his feet, giving the impression of a weather balloon heading for the stratosphere. In spite of his rotundity, he towered a full six feet four inches above the deck.

"Very well, then, Dr. Armitage," the Captain continued, "we'll place the stuff in the strong room down in the hold. It will be quite safe there. Come along."

Three men stood at the rail on the main deck watching people climb the gangplank. They kept their hats pulled low over their eyes and their arms folded on the rail, which made them all look very much alike.

The big, broadshouldered one standing in the middle leaned a little to his left and spoke to the smoothly dressed man standing next to him.

"What are we standing here in this fog for, Boss?" asked Pussyfoot O'Shaughnessy. "Already I'm having a chill and a thirst."

Big and muscular, but still agile, Pussyfoot O'Shaughnessy had once been known as the finest second-story man in Chicago until the rising popularity of ranch houses had put him out of business.

The man addressed as "Boss" was Larry Levine, whose reputation as a jewel thief was exceeded only by his reputation as a lady-killer—both actually and figuratively.

"O'Shaughnessy," said Mr. Levine, "how many times do I have to tell you not to call me "boss"? You have let Hollywood go to your head. Just because you acted the part of a gangster in a Grade B movie once is no reason why you have to talk like one."

"But I *am* a gangster," Mr. O'Shaughnessy pointed out with impeccable logic.

Mr. Levine sighed. "Hasn't it ever occurred to you that it is bad policy to advertise the fact? Now quit acting and keep your eyes open. If you spot anyone we know, speak up fast."

Mr. O'Shaughnessy lapsed

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into silence and peered through a Southampton fog at the gangplank.

After a few moments, Mr. Levine whispered: "Who's that?"

"That" was a small, wiry-looking man wearing a black fez. His dark face, beady black eyes, and corvine nose conspired together to make a countenance far more sinister than that of any of the three men at the rail.

He was pushing a wheelchair up the gangplank, a wheelchair which contained a figure swathed in blankets from head to toe.

"Joe" said Mr. Levine, addressing the third man of the trio, "go check with the purser. That looks funny to me. Find out who's in the wheelchair."

Giuseppe (Little Joe) Manetti was a small, silent man who claimed to be a Sicilian, but his blond hair and blue eyes lent weight to the underworld rumor which held that his father had been an itinerant Swede.

Without a word, he stepped away from the rail and walked down the deck. The other two kept on watching.

"Hey!" whispered Mr. O'Shaughnessy, "there's another bunch!"

This consisted of four bearded, turbaned men, all dressed in neat Western garb except for the headdresses.

Mr. Levine shook his head. "I saw those boys at the hotel. They're Sikhs—from India. They're going to New York on business."

The two gentlemen continued their watching, and within a few minutes, they were rejoined by Mr. Manetti.

"The little guy with the fez is an Egyptian named Ahnku," reported Manetti. "The bird in the chair is his boss, Muhammid ibn Abdul, a rich oil man from Alexandria. Seems like he's allergic to fog, so he's staying under wraps till we get away from England."

"Hmmm," said Mr. Levine. "Maybe. We'll keep an eye on him, just the same."

"You know," said Mr. O'Shaughnessy," I think I'm going to like this trip." He was gazing speculatively at the gangplank. "That is about the seventh luscious female that has come aboard this boat."

Mr. Levine looked down at the lushly curvacious brunette ascending the gangway. He smiled. "That, my dear boy, happens to be Linda Armitage, the daughter of our

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old pal, the Egyptologist. We may see a lot of her."

After checking with the purser, Linda Armitage went below immediately, searching for her father's cabin. She had spent the summer in England, studying at a small London school while her father and Bingham, his assistant, hunted tombs in Egypt. Now she was rejoining them for the voyage home, and would continue her studies at her father's university, Miskatonic.

She made her way through the narrow corridor, looking for Stateroom 101. It involved climbing down a spiralling metal ladder, crossing through a constricted passageway, and threading a course through a hall no more than a couple of feet wide. Luxury liners, she thought, are not as luxurious as one might think.

"Excuse me, please," said a small man dressed in Egyptian garments, who appeared at the other end of the corridor pushing a wheelchair delicately through the narrow passageway. "Sorry, but I must get past, Miss."

Linda glanced down involuntarily at the man in the wheelchair. He was sitting motionless, completely swathed in deck-cloths and blankets. His face was bandaged, as if he had been hideously burnt. Linda repressed a little gasp and flattened herself against the side of the hallway while the small man and his charge went past.

"Excuse me," she said, timidly, as they went by.

The small man turned. "Yes?"

"I—I'm looking for Stateroom 101. Can you tell me where it is?"

The small man's swarthy brow furrowed. "Down to the end of the hall and turn left, Miss. Then up the first staircase. You will find it."

"Thanks," Linda said. But the small man had already turned and was moving on down the corridor with his wheelchaired employer in tow. She shrugged and set out to follow his instructions, moving toward her cabin.

A few minutes later, she had reached Stateroom 101. She knocked.

"Dad?"

There was no answer—which surprised her, because her father had told her definitely to meet him there at that time. She knocked again.

This time, a thin, high male voice said, "Yes? Who's there?"

"Me. Linda."

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"Oh—just a second, Miss Armitage."

There was the sound of hustling and bustling around inside, and then the door opened. The pale, vague face of Leslie Bingham peered out.

"Come on in, Miss Armitage," he said hesitantly. "That is—I mean—well, your father will be back any minute. He was expecting you."

"I know," Linda said. "He told me to meet him here." She stepped inside, edging past the unhappy-looking Bingham, and peered out the port at the busy harbor outside.

After a couple of moments she said, "Where is Dad, anyway?"

"He's up with the Captain. They're busy stowing our relics in the strong room in the hold. He'll be back soon." Bingham chewed at his lower lip nervously, and twined his fingers as if he was not quite sure what else to do with them.

"Oh," Linda said. "Mind if I wait?"

"Not at all, Lin—Miss Armitage." He paced uneasily up and down the small cabin. "I—I don't mind having you around, Miss Armitage."

She shot him a surprised glance. "Oh?"

He flushed bright crimson. "I didn't mean—oh, I'm getting all confused."

Linda smiled. "I'll say you are. But you're sort of fun when you're confused, Leslie."

Using his first name was a mistake, Linda realized. The young archaeologist glowed as proudly as if he'd just been knighted, and seemed to gain in self-confidence almost visibly. He took a deep breath.

"Linda?"

She turned away from the port. "Yes, Leslie?"

"I've been meaning to say this for a long time, Linda. I—"

Linda chuckled. "You haven't changed at all, Leslie. Are you still carrying that torch for me?"

Bingham turned beet-red. "I didn't mean to—that is——yes," he said, suddenly emboldened. "Yes. I am still—ah—carrying the torch." He moved closer to her, and, as if maddened by her nearness, moved even closer.

Linda stepped away from him gracefully, and his arms closed on empty air. His eyes opened and he glanced at her, somewhat dazed.

She smiled icily. "I don't mean to change the subject, Leslie, but I'm awfully cu-

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rious about your discoveries in Egypt. Why don't you tell me what you and Dad found?"

There, she thought. *That ought to get his mind off me. Sex is strictly second-fiddle to Egyptology in Leslie Bingham's alleged mind.*

He lowered his gaze shamefacedly from her plunging, well-filled neckline. "What we found? In Egypt?"

"That's what I'm talking about."

"Well—it was a coffin, mostly. The sarcophagus of Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III, and the mummy thereof. And some jewels that belonged to him."

"Seventeenth dynasty, isn't he?"

"Sixteenth," Bingham corrected fussily.

"And where are the mummy and jewels kept now? I'd love to see them!"

"They're in the hold," Bingham said. "Your father is supervising the job now. We're putting them away for safe keeping. If you'd like to go down there to take a look at them, I could—"

"I'll go later," Linda interrupted smoothly. "By myself."

Bingham began to reply, but stopped hurriedly when the door opened. Dr. Avery Armitage of Miskatonic University stepped through into the cabin and paused, adjusting his *pince-nez.*

"Hello, dear. Good to see you found the cabin," he said. "Hello, Leslie." He smiled. "Well, the Captain and I have everything taken care of. The sarcophagus is stored below, and it's all safe as can be."

"Leslie's been telling me about it," Linda said. "I think it's wonderful, finding a mummy and all."

"Ah—yes," Armitage said. "It'll be quite an addition to our museum, back at Arkham. That is, if we can get it back safely," he added.

"What's that, Daddy?"

"Nothing," Armitage said. "Nothing at all, my dear." He drew forth a handkerchief and wiped the inside of his collar. "Nothing at all, my dear."

Suddenly the ship's horn blasted an earshattering trumpet-call. "I think we're leaving," Bingham said.

Linda glanced out the porthole again. The *Queen Victoria* was slowly and gracefully gliding from the dock.

Ali ul'Adah stood at the porthole of his cabin, gazing at the swiftly receding skyline of Southampton.

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"We are at sea," he said softly. "Anything can happen now."

He turned around, facing the other three. "We must keep in mind that we are not Egyptians, my brothers. One slip and we are done."

Hassan scowled. "I do not like it, Ali; posing as one of the unbelieving Sikh sticks in my throat like sand." His rasping voice did indeed indicate the presence of some kind of abrasive.

Ali scowled back. "Hassan, may I remind you that the recovery of the treasures of the Tomb of Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III is a mission so high as to allow any means of attack, no matter how distasteful."

Mustapha, who was sitting on the edge of the bunk honing a long knife, said: "We need not carry it on too long. Three thrusts—" He jabbed the knife into the air in front of him. "—and they are done."

Haroun, the fourth of the pretended Sikhs shook his head. "Mustapha will never learn. We must proceed quietly and without murder—at least insofar as we can. To kill the infidels who have desecrated the tomb would be disastrous. We would be imprisoned and the relics would reach New York in spite of our efforts."

"Haroun is right," said Ali. Kindly restrain yourself, Mustapha. If you had been successful in Cairo, all would have been well; we could have killed the infidels with impunity. But your stupid blunder has cost us much time and effort—to say nothing of money."

"How was I to know?" Mustapha said defensively. "I thought you said they were in Room 203 of the hotel."

"I very plainly said 302," Ali snapped. "When you found you were in the wrong room, you could have called me."

"But—but—what could I do? Using my well-known technique, I picked the lock of the room, tiptoed in, and raised my knife above the bed. Suddenly, the lights came on, and I saw a girl in the bed. She was a lovely French girl, very frightened. I knew then that I had made a mistake."

Hassan snorted. "Certainly. But what, in the name of Allah, took you *three hours* to get out of there?"

Mustapha smiled feebly. "I was busy," he said.

Ali's habitual scowl grew deeper. "By the Grace of

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Allah, we have one more chance. We must not fail this time."

Ahnku the Ancient sat in his stateroom, puffing reflectively at his pipe. He looked at the heavily swathed figure in the wheelchair.

"Are you warm enough, Lord and Master?" he asked. He chuckled throatily when there was no answer. "Fear not, sire; Ahnku the Ancient will not fail you. What good to be a sorcerer without being able to serve one's Master?"

He stood up, his black eyes glittering. "I will make my Master cooler within the hour. For now, I shall but remove the blankets."

He did so, and then sat down again, puffing slowly at his pipe. "I have waited long for this. My magic is not as great as some have thought—though I dared not admit it to my enemies." He chuckled again, caressing his beak of a nose with one finger. "Indeed, I dared not tell my friends. But I am sure you understand, O Lord and Master. I have served you faithfully for years—ay, more than years. And I have not failed you yet.

"Nor will I fail you tonight. The jewels that are rightfully yours shall belong again to you. Had I known where they were hidden, I would have had them for you long ago. But—" A tear ran down the wizened, hawk-nosed face. "—alas, I did not know. But tonight, my Lord and Master, that which is rightfully yours shall be returned." He wiped away the tear with a bony finger.

Linda Armitage smiled at her father. "Daddy, I respect your learning and all that, but I don't think your choice of husbands for me is very good."

Dr. Armitage made a steeple of his fingers and tapped his fingertips together rhythmically. "Linda, my dear," he said mildly, "Dr. Bingham is a very nice young man. Very intelligent. Very industrious."

Linda sighed. "But Daddy! He's a nice boy, I'll admit, but he—he's so—so *dull!* All he has his mind on is ancient Egypt!" His smile became softer. "Daddy, darling, he's a very smart boy; he has a great deal of intelligence. And that's why I couldn't marry him."

Dr. Armitage blinked. "I don't think I follow you."

Linda stood up, walked over to the brandy decanter

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on the sideboard, and poured herself a drink. "He's too much like you, Daddy."

The Egyptologist watched her down the brandy neat. "You drink too fast, my dear; it will upset you. What do you mean, he's too much like me?"

Linda poured another, and her smile became a devilish grin. "Daddy, much as I love you, I do *not* have an Electra complex."

Her father blinked for a moment, then reddened. "Really, my dear! I—I'm shocked! Being on the stage in England hasn't done well for your morals, I'm sure! Why, you talk as though you were a loose woman!"

Smiling softly, Linda finished her second brandy and then walked over to her father. She patted him gently on his cheek and said: "Daddy, you're very wrong. I'm not going to be indignant, but believe me, you're wrong. "I can give you all sorts of testimony—from very respectable men—that I am not at all loose."

Dr. Armitage smiled a little, and adjusted the glasses on the bridge of his nose. "I'm sure you can, my dear. I didn't mean it at all that way. But I still think—"

"Daddy," she interrupted, "let's don't talk about Leslie. I want to know how you did in Egypt. What sort of things did you find?"

Dr. Armitage leaned back in his chair and smiled. "My dear, I think you'll be very proud of me—and Leslie. We've discovered something wonderful. It's really one of the greatest things since the unearthing of the tomb of Tutankhamen, back in the Twenties." His smile grew even broader as he leaned forward conspiratorially. "My dear, I think we have found the original Belt of Osiris."

The girl looked thoughtful. "As I recall, that's the belt which is supposed to confer immortality on its wearer. It would be nice to have such a belt."

Dr. Armitage smiled. "My dear, this is not, of course, the mythical Belt of Osiris. But, if you will recall, a belt was made—a girdle, really—of gold and diamonds, which was supposed to be the symbol of kingship among the ancient Egyptians. It was a replica of the supposed Belt of Osiris, much as a cross in a church is a replica of the Cross of Christ. We do not, of course, believe that this belt is really the original Belt of Osiris."

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Linda grinned. "Too bad. That Belt was supposed to have granted a lot of power to the person who wore it."

"Yes," agreed the Egyptologist, "it was supposed to confer, not only immortality, but the ability to—well—have—uh—tremendous physical and—uh—amorous powers."

Linda said: "Give it to Leslie; he needs it."

"Linda!"

Her smile was impish. "I'm sorry Daddy. By the way—can I see the sarcophagus? Do you really have the mummy of the great Pharaoh, Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III down in the hold?"

"I certainly do, my dear. Would you care to see it? I have the key to the strong room in the hold."

"Let's go, Daddy! I've always wanted to see an ancient Egyptian prince in a nice, warm box."

Ahnku the Ancient fingered the key in his hand and smiled conspiratorially to himself. Not everyone could get a key to the strong room in the hold, but, a sorcerer had resources greater than the average man.

He moved silently along the corridors of the ship, taking care not to make any more noise than necessary.

At last, he stood before the strong room, deep beneath the waterline of the *Queen Victoria*. He looked up and down the corridors, then inserted the key into the lock.

It turned easily, and the door clicked open. Ahnku stepped inside, flicked on the light, and closed the door behind him.

It was a huge room, protected on all sides by heavy steel bulkheads. It was filled with heavy wooden cases and boxes of all sorts, kinds, and descriptions.

Ahnku rubbed his dry, old hands together. "Tonight, my Lord and Master, you will regain your birthright." He cackled fiendishly in glee. Then he gazed around. The room was gloomily illuminated, and the piles of boxes cast long shadows over everything.

For the first time since he had boarded the ship, Ahnku the ancient spoke English, a habit which he had fallen into for voicing ejaculations.

"Cripes! Where the hell's the old man's casket?"

He began prowling around the vast room.

Eventually, he found what he was looking for. The sarcophagus of King Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III was against one bulkhead in the

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gloomiest part of the strong room. Nearby lay a large golden chest.

"Ahaa!" the little, weasel-like man said. "AHAAAAA! The Treasure of the King!"

Pulling a golden key from his pocket, he inserted it into the keyhole and turned it. Then he lifted the lid of the golden chest. "If it isn't here," he muttered softly, "I shall kill—"

But he didn't finish the sentence. Before him, glittering warmly in the dim light, lay the fabulous diamond Belt of Osiris.

"Praise be to the Gods!" the little magician said, lifting the belt reverently. "The Belt is safe!"

Then he heard a noise. He jerked his head around swiftly. The noise had come from beyond the packing cases that were piled around him. Someone was coming in the door!

His next actions were rapid, but unhurried. He scuttled over to the sarcophagus of the king—a King of Egypt who had died thousands of years before—and opened the casket.

Carefully, he clasped the Belt of Osiris around the waist of the mummy within.

"They'll never find it there," he chortled.

Then, moving quickly, he scuttled off into the shadowy protection offered by the piles of cases in the room.

"Down this way," Dr. Armitage said. "Follow me."

"I'm following," said his daughter. "If I could only find my way through all these cobwebs!" She coughed and brushed dust away from her eyes.

"They're not cobwebs, my dear. They've just loaded the ship, you know. It's merely dust that has—"

"Yes, father." She coughed again. "Where is this sarcophagus of yours stored?"

"It's over here, Linda." They made their way toward the bulkhead where the sculptured sarcophagus and the jewel-casket lay. Armitage pointed ahead, his eyes, in the dark, bright with excitement. *"There!"*

Despite herself, Linda felt a little tingle of anticipation as she spied the casket and sarcophagus. "Can you open them, Daddy?"

Dr. Armitage drew a flat leather case from his pocket. "Yes," he said. "Yes—after the greatest effort, we, Leslie and I, succeeded in finding the secret to the mechanism that opens and closes the casket and the sarcophagus."

A sliver of metal glinted in

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his hand. "Here's the key," he said. "The only key to the jewel-casket of Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen III. You have no idea how lovely these treasures are, my dear. Lovely! Lovely beyond dreams!"

"Does the same key open the sarcophagus?"

"Yes—but it's a slightly different technique. I'll show you. Here—let's open the sarcophagus first, shall we?"

He slid the key into an aperture at the side of the sarcophagus, and began to move his wrist. She glanced at him uneasily.

"Dad?"

"Yes, Linda?"

"I'd rather see the jewels," she said, moistening her dry lips. "I'm—not so terribly interested in the mummy after all."

Armitage looked at her, then chuckled. "But—but Linda, the mummy's perfectly harmless! Don't be foolish, my dear! Why—"

He caught a glimpse of her nervous face and chuckled again. "Very well." He drew the key out of the unopened sarcophagus and handed it to Linda. "Here—the pleasure is all yours, dear. You may open the jewel-casket, if you like."

She took the key from him and walked to the casket.

Armitage rubbed his hand lovingly along the rim of the sarcophagus, feeling a warm glow of pride. After years of work in the field, *this* was his great discovery; *this* was his crowning achievement.

"I'm having trouble with the key, Daddy," Linda said unhappily. "How do you work it?"

"I'll be right over," Armitage said dreamily, still lost in contemplation. As he started to walk toward her, he glanced down at his foot. A scarab-shaped amethyst lay there, sparkling b r i g h t l y against the dull black of the deck.

Curious, he thought. *What's that doing there?*

Then he stooped and picked the jewel up, his heart beating faster. The amethyst *had* no business being there—none at all!

Hastily, he crossed the few feet that separated him from the jewel-box, snatched the key from Linda. "Great heavens! Something must have happened!"

With trembling fingers he fumbled the box open and peered down. He stared for a long moment.

"What's the matter, Daddy? Something wrong?"

"Yes," he said somberly.

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"The Belt! The Belt of Osiris —it's gone!"

"How horrible! But you said yours was the only key!"

"I know," Armitage said. He looked around the strong-room frantically, staring at the scarab in his hand—the scarab that must have fallen from the Belt of Osiris.

"You wait here," he said. "I'll have to see the Captain about this. That Belt was priceless — simply priceless! I'll have to see the Captain!"

"But Daddy!"

Linda called a third time, but saw there was no point in calling again. Dr. Armitage had rushed out—leaving her alone in the dank, musty hold!

That was just like Daddy, she thought, once the surprise of being left alone had worn off. Leaving her alone like this, all because of some missing trinket. The hold was a nasty, unpleasant place, and there were strange creakings someplace near the back.

Rats, she thought, with a little shudder. Rats. Every ship had rats in the hold. Uneasily she glanced down at her trim ankles as if expecting to see a beady-eyed little rodent nibbling at her at that very instant.

The creaking continued. Linda didn't like it, not at all. Nervously, she tiptoed back to the jewel-casket and lifted its lid. She peered in.

The jewels were lovely. There was a single immense ruby, carved in a multitude of facets and seeming to glow with a deep, warm inner light. There was a jewel-encrusted coronet which she lifted out tenderly and placed around her head. After a moment, she returned it to the box.

There were other gems there too. The casket was probably worth millions—and Daddy, she thought ruefully, would give it all to the museum at the University, to be put behind glass for people to gape at.

Creak-k-k!

Linda glanced up in alarm. It seemed to her as if a crate at the bar corner of the hold had moved, somehow. For a moment, she thought she saw a faint, shadowy shape gliding between the packing-cartons.

Just my imagination, she decided firmly. *The ship's probably rolling, that's all.*

Creak-k-k-k!

This time it couldn't be imagination. She felt her heart pounding furiously. Dropping the diadem she was holding, back into the box, she closed the lid and spun on her

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heel, making a complete 360-degree examination of the hold. It seemed to be empty. It *seemed* to be.

I wish Daddy would get back, she thought.

Creak-k-k-k-k-k!

She turned again—and glanced at the sarcophagus.

And gasped.

The massive lid of the ancient coffin was rising, slowly, unbelievably, beyond any shred of doubt.

She stood there, rooted to the deck, watching in terror as the lid moved upward. In the half-gloom, she could make out a figure within the sarcophagus—the white, bandage-swathed figure of—of—

It could only be the mummy. It was sitting up now, one arm clinging to the outside of the sarcophagus, pulling itself to a standing position.

Linda didn't wait. She screamed, once, sharply, and then turned and fled. Her heels clattered over the deck as she ran through the strong room and out into the dim corridor. Behind her, the creaking grew louder.

Lady Blessingame (of the Stratfordshire Blessingames) stepped out into the corridor beyond the door of her stateroom, smiling superciliously. If Lord Blessingame was silly enough to allow her to travel to America, there was no reason why she should not take advantage of it.

The sun had dropped beyond the western horizon, and moonlight had fallen over the ship. It was really *terribly* romantic, Lady Blessingame thought.

The corridor, while not brightly lighted, was well filled with dim yellow-orange light, which permitted her to see easily the thing that approached her.

It was a tall, shambling figure, covered with rotting linen bandages, and smelling of the dust of an ancient tomb.

Lady Blessingame stared in shock at the horrifying figure, and suddenly collapsed to the deck.

Adelaide Dorensen closed the door of a stateroom. Just before the door closed, she pulled it open just a bit and said: "Orrie Vorre, shweety."

"You mean *au revoir*," said First Officer Pinkin, within the cabin.

"Thash French — er — French," said the blonde-haired Adelaide. "Anyhow, thanksh for the champagne—and all."

She closed the door and walked carefully down the companionway. "Great stuff,

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champagne," she said gleefully to herself. "Really great stuff."

She stopped, suddenly, as someone approached her down the companionway. She peered carefully at the figure.

"Watcha matter witchoo?" she asked. Then, realizing that her diction was hardly up to par, she restated the question. "Watsa matter with yew? Wats alla bandages for?"

Then the unmistakable odor of decaying cloth came to her, and Miss Adelaide Dorensen remembered the horror stories of her childhood.

She turned around quickly, jerked open the door of the First Officer's stateroom, and pushed herself inside.

"Migod!" she said blankly to the astonished Pinkin, "The Mummy Walks Again!"

First Officer Pinkin sat up in his bunk. "I *beg* your pardon, Miss Dorensen?"

Miss Dorensen looked absolutely stupid and slid to the floor. She was out colder than an Antarctic iceberg.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Stephen Lendrip, having spent a comfortable evening gazing at the sea and smoking his favorite briar, decided to go below. In his hand he carried his walking-stick, a weapon which had stood him in good stead for many a year. It contained a long-bladed knife—almost the equivalent of a Roman short-sword.

Against an unarmed man, Sir Stephen would never use the stick sword, but many years as commanding officer of the Eleventh Hussars had made him aware of the fact that an armed man could easily be overwhelmed by a determined man. The stick was a comfort in crisis.

He stepped down the ladder toward the lower deck, and, swinging his stick joyfully, he headed toward his stateroom.

He turned a corner, and was suddenly confronted with a gentleman clad entirely in gauze bandages. He collided violently with the figure and then stepped back.

"I say, old man; you could at least whistle!"

The bandaged figure stepped back, too.

Then Sir Stephen whipped out his sword. He saw what it was that stood before him, and, in spite of his horror, he lunged forward with the blade.

The wrapped thing stepped back quickly, and, in doing so, almost collided with a dark figure behind it. The

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point of the blade narrowly missed the figure's abdomen.

Sir Stephen stepped forward again, this time aiming his point at the thing's throat. The thing moved with lightning-like speed. Its hand came up, palm first, and deflected the blade. Then it's fist lashed out, slamming against Sir Stephen's jaw with skull-shattering force.

Sir Stephen went down for the count.

Dr. Avery Armitage ran up the spiral ladder to the upper deck at top speed. He reached the deck and looked around. Where was he? He could smell the faintly fishy odor of salt air—

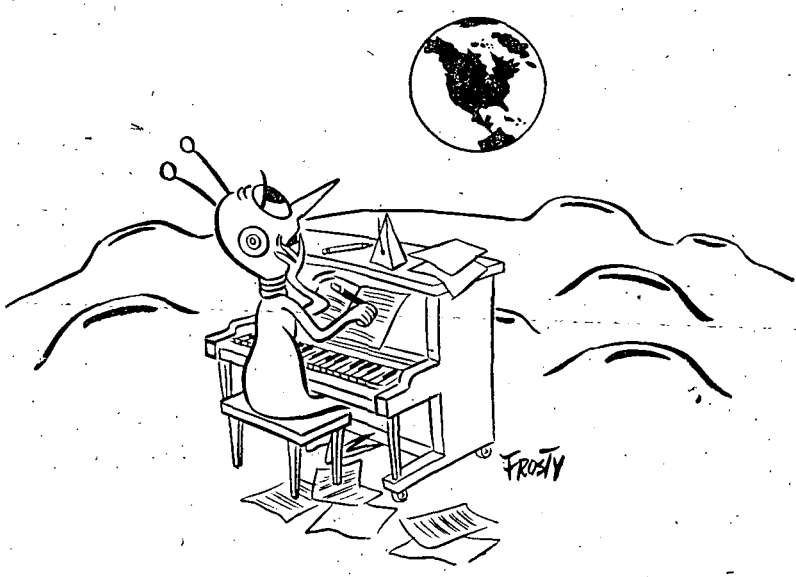
In the moonlight he saw the deck around him, and, looking up, he saw the bridge deck.

Galloping across the main deck, he ran up the ladder.

Captain Humphrey Boggs stood on his bridge—monarch of all he surveyed. He thrust out his lower lip, patted his bulging abdomen and said: "A bit to starboard, young man. You're half a point off."

The helmsman was just complying with the order when a clopping sound was

(Continued on page 112)



"Earth—mirth—dearth—worth—girth. . . ."

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DEATH RATTLE

By O. H. LESLIE

The space invader consisted mainly of pure horror, but when the going gets rough, Earth can dish out a little horror itself.

THE forager was happy.

In ecstasy, he rolled his sleek gray body over the dusty terrain, and sang his alien, wordless song of contentment. For of all the gray ones who had gathered in the void, it was he—he alone—who had made landfall on this green, lush, innocent globe.

He had discovered food!

Food that slithered and crawled on the ground. Food that padded on four silent feet. Food that flew in the air and swam in the waters.

And best of all—food that walked upright, with long columns of succulent flesh.

The hot white light of the planet's sun danced on the dust motes he raised from the ground. But the forager himself was no more than a bend in the light rays. A shimmering nothingness, a growling, fanged thing no intelligent eye could perceive.

He laughed shrilly. This was his advantage; this was his weapon. Evolution sided with the forager and his race, causing a blindness in the eyes of creatures with developed brains.

Invisible, he sang his song of victory.

Thrashing on the desert

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floor, he screamed his unholy prayer of grace, before the meal began.

Then he was silent.

An instinct greater than hunger brought him erect. It was a duty, an obligation born within his gray body. He must return to the void, return to the meeting place between the stars. He must give his message to the others. He must describe the banquet that awaited them on this fine green sphere.

For he was but one of the food-seekers. At this moment, the gray ones were snuffing across the terrain of eight other worlds, seeking to find the planet in this star system which promised satiety to their greedy appetites.

Some would never return, and they would not be mourned. For this was duty. Their failure to return would warn the others of danger—and their wandering would continue into space.

The forager gazed mournfully across the plateau, towards the escarpment, thinking of the two-legged food that bred thickly beyond the mountains.

But his duty was clear. He must return with his news, so that all might feed, so that all might scrape this planet clean of its good things to eat.

Suddenly, there was a sound.

He gazed across the endless desert, and saw the edibles moving slowly towards him. Hunger gnawed at him.

"Pretty?" Mona said, in a shocked voice. "Honest to Pete, Val! Are you serious?"

The cowboy hunkered closer over the steering wheel of the red convertible, and grumbled something into his open shirt collar.

"Now if you want to see *really* pretty country," the girl said, "you ought to see Massachusetts in the fall. Now that's something to see. Not this bleak bunch of rocks!"

The cowboy muttered something, and the girl leaned back against the black-leather upholstery. She drew the proper tools from the canvas bag in her lap, and began to apply lipstick and powder.

"It's good country," Val said stubbornly. "I was born and raised here, Mona."

"That doesn't mean we have to rot here, cowboy." She scowled at the scenery. "God's country . . ." she sneered, and lifted the mirror in her hand.

They rode in silence for a while.

Then the girl cried out.

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"What's the matter?" Val said.

"Up there—up ahead!" She thrust a trembling finger to the road in front of them.

"I don't see nothin'."

"I thought I saw something by those rocks. Something—moving."

"Nothin' there now."

"It was like a—a shadow. No! Like a twisted column of air. I could have sworn—"

"Sun's pretty hot," the cowboy grinned. "You better let me put the top up, Mona."

"No. I'm all right now. It was just—oh, I don't know. And stop grinning, you idiot! Do you hear me?"

The forager waited.

The bright red thing rolled towards him, trailing a cloud of white dust, the two edibles squirming in front.

His fangs parted, and his empty stomach complained.

Hunger and duty were fighting within him. He must return to the void. He must eat! He must return to the void! He must eat—

He angled out on the road.

Behind him, on the ground, something made a noise.

He turned.

The Earth-thing slithered and raised its tail. The shrill sound it made annoyed him. He swept a sleek tentacle towards the thing, to brush it aside.

But the Earth - thing's beady eyes were upon him, its pitiful bit of brain perceiving his presence. Not blocked by intellect. It recoiled at the movement of his body.

Then it struck.

The forager howled!

The teeth of the Earth-thing clamped on his soft, pulpy flesh, punctured it, and sent fire coursing through his limbs. He screamed in fury and vexation, and danced on the dust until the creature released its hold.

Then he staggered away.

But his movements were leaden. The fire released by the crawling earth-monster was burning furiously within him.

He stumbled, fell, lifted himself again.

Then he toppled forward, and lay still.

His last thought was of food. But he would never eat again.

The car stopped.

"All right," the girl grumbled. "If you're going to act *that* way about it. Put the silly top up."

"No use bein' foolish," the cowboy said mildly. "Sun's gonna be really hot in an hour or so."

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"I said all right, didn't I? Think I'll stretch my legs meanwhile."

She yawned, and got out of the car. Then she lifted a pack of cigarettes out of her shirt pocket.

She was about to light one when she saw the rattler.

"Val!" she said hoarsely.

"Huh?"

"Val!" she shrieked. "*Rattlesnake!*"

"Don't move!" the man commanded. "Hear me, Mona? Don't move a muscle!"

She froze, in horror.

"Just keep like you are," he said softly, his hand stealing towards the rifle in the rear seat. "Just keep real nice and cool . . ."

"Oh, God," she moaned.

Slowly, the rifle was cradled in the man's big brown hands. Gently, he cocked it. Then he lifted the weapon just a fraction.

Crack!

"You got him!" the girl sobbed. "You got him, Val!"

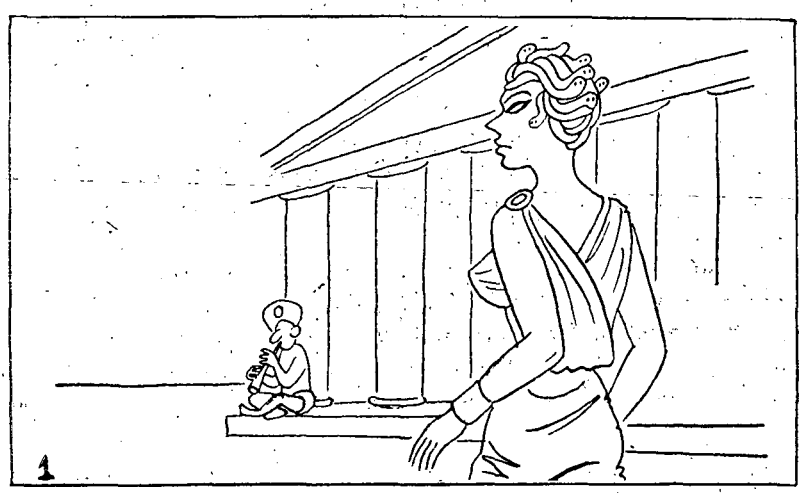
"Yeah." The man walked over to it. "Shot the varmint's head clean off . . ."

He lifted a forked stick from the ground and hoisted the dead reptile in the air. "Mighty nice trophy," he grinned.

"Oh, Val!" the girl said in loathing. "How could God make such horrible creatures! How could He do it? Why? What for?"

The cowboy shrugged. "Dunno, honey. Reckon you'll have to ask Him . . ."

THE END



(See page 130)

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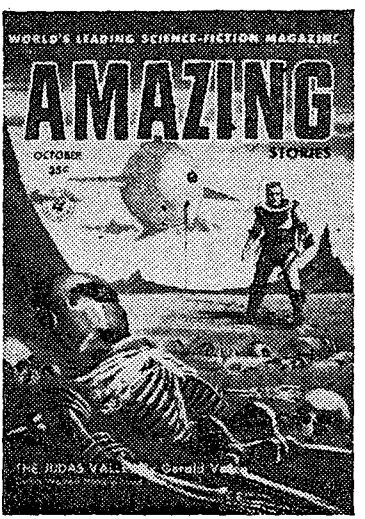
DEATH STRUCK FOR NO APPARENT REASON!



When the seven men set foot in "The Judas Valley," each died instantly! Scientific instruments were unable to discover why. But with raw courage, two adventurers faced the invisible danger, defied the mystery of the valley.

Read the story of their exploits—"The Judas Valley" by Gerald Vance—in October AMAZING STORIES.

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The Fifth Stone

By ALFRED COPPEL

What lay behind this family of accident prones? Was it something in the blood? Generation after generation falling into the same trap. John Marsh had to find out and there was only one way—join the family!

THE man who had died once and would die again and still live, lay on the hospital cot. Blood and saline oozed from the racked jars and flowed through a tangle of plastic tubes into his veins. The electrocardiograph recorded a failing heart action. A sphygmograph needle traced the weakening pulse.

John Marsh had only minutes of life left to him and Calder, the therapist from BuPsych, watched the splintered wreckage on the cot with compassion. No matter what Marsh had done, he was dying a horrible death for it, his face and body bloated and torn from internal pressures, his tendons and muscles ripped from broken bones, his flesh burned and frozen and tinted blueblack by his own ruptured blood vessels. An unprotected man in space goes through hell before he dies.

The Spaceforce line officer, a captain with silver lightnings on the peak of his cap and a delta-winged rocket on his breast, frowned at the medic who stood apart in the far corner of the room.

The medic shook his head. "I'm sorry. He's dying and there's nothing more we can do about it."

The captain held his clenched fists against the seam of his trousers. His knuckles were white. When he spoke there was hopeless fury in his voice. "I only wish I could kill him with my own hands."

The words hung in the humming stillness. In the corridor could be heard the

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Madness, destruction, and the point of no return.

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measured pacing of the double guard. Beyond the barred windows a meteor streaked across the starfields. Another.

"He won't last the night," Calder said. Because his training was emphatic, he could *feel* Marsh dying.

"We've been damned lucky to keep him alive this long," the medic said, "Staff has done a job on him." He was thinking that no one really appreciated just how good a job had been needed to keep John Marsh alive even for an hour, let alone two days. He looked at Calder and the captain from under lowered brows. The damned brasshat only wanted Marsh alive so he could be killed legally. Well, that was his business and in a way it was too bad he wasn't going to get his way. Certainly Marsh deserved the worst. But a higher authority was taking it out of the captain's hands and he was going to have to be satisfied with what Marsh had already suffered. Calder, now, was different. The BuPsych man looked as though he had his teeth into something. The way he handled those tapes and wires—like they were pure gold. It was chilling the way BuPsych people could *get inside* and actually *be* someone. That damned empathic training. Perhaps that was why they all seemed so vague and blank when they weren't working. To be really empathic, you couldn't have any real personality of your own to get in the way.

The medic sighed and turned back to his death watch, awaiting the last minutes.

Calder began collecting his equipment. The recorder, the tapes, the subvocal micropickups.

"Will you be able to make anything out of all that?" the captain asked. "I couldn't hear a goddam thing."

"Those things are so sensitive they can almost seem to pick up thoughts," Calder said. "Not really, of course. But if there's enough life left in a subject for any sort of subvocalization, they'll tape it."

The captain's long face seemed carved from polished bone. Only his eyes were alive, and they were burning. "How soon will you have it all transcribed?"

"It'll take some time," Calder said. "It's like doing an analysis. Only I have to be both the therapist and the analysand. You can't rush it."

"The court of inquiry convenes at 0800 hours tomorrow. Be prepared to make

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your presentation then," the captain said curtly.

Calder suppressed an unmilitary protest. There were documents to examine, and records. Then the tapes. He would have to actually *become* Marsh and live the crucial periods of his life. It could be done in a night, with the help of stay-awake pills. But his effectiveness would be impaired and so would his defenses against total transference.

"I could use more time, sir," Calder said.

"The court is at 0800 hours."

"Yes, sir."

The captain's bone-gray face showed his inner tension. "We have to know why. That's what's important. Why, and how to prevent it happening again."

"This isn't the first time, is it?" Calder asked, fishing.

"Has there been a breach of security, Mister Calder?" The captain spoke in a harsh, flat voice.

"Rumors, sir. And a classmate of mine was on the Wheel two years ago."

The captain walked slowly across the room to look down into the shattered face. "Another one of Timur Denby's sons. In spite of everything we did to keep them down. Damn them all!" His face grew livid with hate and the medic tensed, watching.

Quite abruptly, the captain straightened and walked swiftly from the room. Calder heard the clash of metal as the guards saluted and then the sound of steel-shod footsteps echoing down the corridor.

The medic let his breath out with a sigh. "He wasn't kidding, was he?"

Calder shook his head slowly.

"What was that Denby business?"

"David Denby. That's his name. John Marsh is an alias."

The medic studied the figure on the cot. "*The* Timur Denby's son?"

"The youngest," Calder said, locking his instrument case.

"I'll be damned. A First Lander's brat. It's hard to believe, isn't it?"

"Is it?"

"I thought the captain was really going to do what he said. With his bare hands."

"Most spacemen would feel the same way."

"They're giving out it was an accident, I suppose."

"That's probably what they'll say."

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The medic shook his head disbelievingly. "A First Lander's kid—" He glanced at Calder. "Was he—you know—crazy?"

Calder frowned at the use of what his elementary psych instructors would have called a polarized word.

"I mean," the medic said, "five hundred people. And his own crew. Well—"

"And New Providence," Calder said. "It was more than mass murder. It was—" He shrugged. "Is there a word for it?"

The medic watched the flickering pulse of the sphygmograph needle. It flickered once. Twice. Again. And was still.

"If there is a word," he said, "he'll never hear it. He's finally gone."

Calder picked up his recorder. He had the curious feeling of being custodian of a man's soul. All that was left of David Denby, alias Captain John Marsh, was on Calder's tapes.

He watched the medic cover the dead face before he turned and quietly left the room.

The old-fashioned study lamp cast a pool of light on the desktop. The files and related documents had been examined, but only part of the mystery was dispelled.

His name was David Denby, and he was born in the industrial slums of the Mars Colony, New Providence. He grew up there, the youngest of five brothers: Isaiah, Mark, Charles, Dennison, and David. Father: Timur Denby, crewman of the *Hound of Heaven*, the first ship to arrive safely on Mars. Mother: unknown, presumed dead. So the files read.

Like all his brothers, David went into space as a racketman. For a Marschild there were only two choices. The space service or work in the huge industrial complexes of New Providence. He rose from jetman to section officer to astrogator, and finally to second pilot.

There the trail marked David Denby ended.

A year later, a second pilot of Martian colonial origin obtained command of the *Roc*, a fairish chemical rocket of 500 tons thrust. The man's name was John Marsh.

That much you knew from the trail of forms and records any man leaves behind him. Even a new identity can be uncovered and attached to a man's history. No problem for CIA and Spaceforce Intelligence. No problem at all,

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Calder thought wryly, *after the fact.*

Item. Denby became Marsh —took two weeks and a day from the time that Charles Denby's ship, *Cygnus,* exploded a hundred miles from the Wheel on a routine flight from Mars.

There was a pattern too obvious to miss. Isaiah and Mark lost in the *Goddard.* Charles in *Cygnus,* Dennison in the *Stella Polaris.* And now David Denby in the *Roc.*

Spaceflight was hazardous, yes. But not that hazardous. Atomics were still in the future, perhaps a hundred years in the future for spaceships. Venus was an impenetrable formaldehyde desert, the Outer Planets methane glaciers. Only Mars could be exploited for needed ores. Uranium, iron, tungsten, platinum, palladium, everything the home world needed. So flight into space was a regulated, almost routine thing. Barring accidents.

But five accidents in the same family? What was it that line captain had said? "Another one of Timur Denby's sons. In spite of everything we did to keep them down."

Calder rubbed his chin with the back of his hand and cursed his job. This was like trying to restore a portrait out of scattered flecks of paint. A ravaged near-corpse picked up in space. Personal effects. A book of old poems amidst the spinning, orbiting debris of the *Roc.* And old man's blindness. Timur Denby had lost his sight in a hydrazine explosion and had never returned to Earth with the *Hound.* Was that significant, Calder wondered? What had the old man done those two years alone on Mars while the *Hound* returned home to the Wheel to report Mars ready for the taking?

Calder had never been to Mars, but he had seen the antiquities a few of the spacemen brought home with them. The jade carvings, the fragmented mosaics, the delicately alien figurines. All created by the race vanished a million years before men left their caves.

He suppressed a shiver. What had two years alone with that incredibly ancient past done to Timur Denby and the woman crew member who presumably remained with him to bear his sons?

Somehow it must all be woven together into a pattern acceptable to eleven stone-faced officers of a court of inquiry. Because in some way it

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led to David Denby's vicious, wantonly destructive, treasonable crime.

He opened the thin volume of poems. It was an old book, very old. But of terrestrial origin. He smiled at that thought. Had he expected it to be some sort of Rosetta Stone for the undeciphered ancient Martian glyphs? Who would be interested in this era of ruthless expansion anyway? Empathy again. Already he was beginning to feel like one of Timur Denby's sons.

Some of the pages were heavily underscored. The lines were drawn with a modern stylus, so it must have been David and not Timur who chose the lines to emphasize. He began to read slowly.

Oh bless your blindness, glory in your groping—

People didn't write like that any more; the line had a quality of exaltation that was missing from modern life.

He read on until he came to another underscored line.

Sling your fifth stone, oh son of mine, and win—

Calder closed the book, holding the place with his fingers. The fifth stone. He opened the book once more and reread the line.

He had the feeling of looking without seeing, of knowing without understanding. The line was obviously opposite.

He stood up and lit a cigarette thoughtfully. He looked at the recorder. He was avoiding it because the key to the puzzle was so tantalizingly *there.*

He was almost afraid to be David Denby for the space of an hour.

He dropped his cigarette, half-smoked, into the disposal slot and forced himself to sit down again.

Time was getting short.

He sighed and reached for the switch. The plastic tape began to run from one spool to another.

He snapped off the desk lamp and the square of the window came alive with stars. The skyglow from the shops and working areas of Mojave couldn't dim the brilliance of the moonless desert night. He watched the meteor-fragments fall and burn, fall and burn. Someone had estimated it would be eight months before the last of the debris stopped falling.

He leaned back in his chair and began the pre-empathic relaxing exercises. The recorder hummed hypnotically in the darkened room.

Through the background

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noises picked up by the supersensitive instrument — the sighing of breath into lacerate lungs, the whisper of sluggish, cooling blood flowing through veins and arteries, the incipient cannibalistic feast-noises of self-degestion that accompany dying—he could hear David Denby communicating.

The sprawling complex of the great, useless spaceport beyond the walls of his room faded into unreality as the transference began.

A thousand years earlier men would have said he was being possessed. He would have crouched in a pentagram and the smoke of incense would have filled the air in his room.

Now it was only the hum of the recorder as the dead mind of David Denby crept into his.

And then he *was* David Denby, going home to Mars.

I was on the Wheel when they told me about Dennison. They didn't know I was his brother, of course, or they would never have said anything at all to me. They would have just taken the *Roc* away and given her to someone else.

There was even talk about some of the crews meeting in New Providence and lynching the old man. They knew that somehow he was behind it all.

In a way, I felt the same as the rest of them did. Yes, Timur was my father and I was the missing fifth son everyone was ready to fear, but I have been a spaceman all my life and I felt as the rest did that what my brothers did was worse than murder. I didn't know then what it was they were *trying* to do. If I had, I might have been ready to kill Timur with my own hands.

On the outward flight to Mars, my crew talked of nothing else but Dennison and the *Stella Polaris*. It happened only two hundred miles from the Wheel and the ship had been locked on radar control so everyone saw the blowup. There were no survivors. No, no one could *prove* Dennison was responsible, but the word Denby was the same as Jonah by this time.

And so I found myself going home. Someone, I forget now who it was, had seen Timur on his last trip to New Providence, and the rumor was that he was dying.

Among spacemen, that was a happy rumor.

I had to see for myself. I thought then that it was only this that drew me back to the stinking hovel where I was

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born, amid the slagheaps and the filthy industrial rubble of the Old City.

We lived close to the alien legends in the Old City. My father had lived there alone with my mother long before New Providence was built. He was blinded by an explosion and couldn't return on the first ship, the *Hound*. My mother—I never knew her, she died when I was born—stayed with him. She was a technician for the original expedition and Timur must have been a handsome man because she stayed with him in spite of his blindness—or maybe because of it. I don't know. As I say, I never knew her, but she would have had to be a remarkable woman to face two years alone on Mars with only a blind man for companion. By the time I was born, the Old City was a rubbish heap. But I remember that my brother Mark, who was my favorite, used to tell me that he remembered it differently. All I know is that my earliest memories are of filth, privation, and hostility from our neighbors.

I've said we lived close to the old legends. We all did. But even so, our family was set apart. I think it was those two years Timur and my mother spent alone on the planet before the second expedition landed. People said Timur had learned things no man should learn and that he had become something *different*.

I used to lie awake on my narrow bed and listen to the music coming from the bars and honkytonks across the canal and I'd wish with all my heart that I were a real Earthman and that some day I could go home. At that time I thought of Earth, the Earth I had never seen, as my home.

Timur's old shipmates used to come across to the Old City —Dumptown, they called it— for a visit with my father whenever their ships landed at the spaceport on the other side of New Providence. I'd sit and listen to them talk about home, about the oceans I'd never seen, about skies that were pale blue and not dark at midday, about trees and green grass and great teeming cities full of aircraft. I was about ten then, and Earth was my fairyland.

But Timur would only scowl and nibble on the bitter lichens he liked so well and pretty soon the old shipmates would feel uncomfortable, as though they were in the presence of an alien of some kind, and they would leave.

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The kindest of them would say to me, "Your old man's gone native, Davy. He's a regular Marski now." Which was supposed to be funny because the Martians had all died millions of years ago and left only the old ruins.

It was when Isaiah left home to sign as able spaceman on the *Centaur* that I realized for the first time that Timur hated Earth.

Before Isaiah left, Timur took him away into the hills, toward the crumbled ruins on the edge of Solis Lacus. They spent what seemed to me a long time there, and when my brother returned, he was *different*. I mean that. His face was the same and he walked and talked the same way, but he was suddenly apart from Mark and Charles and Denny and me. He was *with* Timur. And deep down inside I could feel that both of them had shared something the rest of us knew nothing about.

I was only thirteen then, around eight by Martian count, and I could have been mistaken.

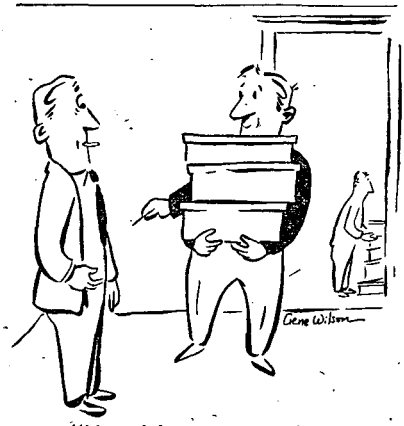
But when it came Mark's turn to go. I knew it was no mistake. Mark changed, too, after that visit to the hills. [illegible] after he had gone, I be[illegible]row afraid.

[illegible] brothers left in their turn. Isaiah was lost on the *Goddard*, together with Mark. Mark signed on the *Goddard* because he wanted to be with his brother, and so both of them died.

Then Charles left, and finally Dennison, and I found myself alone with Timur.

By this time, his old shipmates had all either died or stopped making the trek across the canal to Dumptown. The children of the mine and smelter workers who lived near us hated me because I was the son of a First Lander and therefore a kind of dirt poor aristocrat aand at the same time I was Timur's son, and Timur was queer, crazy, blind, and he hated Earth.

I didn't hate Earth. The music room from across the canal, the neon lights burning



"Yes, I have a match!"

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at night, the tinsel and excitement of New Providence, symbolized for me all that was wonderful and exciting.

What I did hate was our grinding poverty, and the sight of my father's milk-white eyes, and having to read to him from the old books he and mother had brought from Earth , and most of all I hated the prospect of my initiation trip into the hills that was surely coming.

I was afraid of the old ruins. I think now that I was afraid of old Timur, too. Not that he was cruel to me. Only that he was so different from everyone else. And at sixteen the last thing I wanted was to be different—like that.

Perhaps this is hindsight, but it seems to me now that I was always conscious of a *presence* around Timur. And when my brothers came back from the ruins, it was the same with them. I feared that more than anything else. It made me long for the hell-raising, wanton gaiety of New Providence and more important, the planet New Providence belonged to.

The Old City was part of Mars somehow, built on the remains of the ancient Martian town. New Providence, with its factories and mines and theatres and ginmills and the rowdy men from the industries and the spaceport—that was Earth.

And so, two weeks before by eighteenth birthday, I ran away.

The Old City school wasn't so bad that I couldn't work my way into a technical job in New Providence. And from there, I followed my brothers into the space service.

It was an unkindness, leaving a blind old man. I knew it. But a combination of fear and desire for things terrestrial combined to give me the power to rationalize my actions.

I seldom went back. And when I did, I hated it, and Timur was constrained with me. I gave him money, as Charles and Dennison did, but he lived in the same way as he always had. As though physical discomforts affected him not at all. He refused to move out of Dumptown.

Then Charles was lost in the *Cygnus*, and the name Denby was becoming famous again. For all the wrong reasons.

I was in line for a command of my own and the owners of the ship told me th[illegible] no crew would fly with [illegible] tain named Denby.

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So I became John Marsh.

But I was still Timur's son, and when Dennison died and I was the only one left, I resolved to go and see my father.

That's how I returned home to Mars. I had to discover Timur's influence.

The years had taught me something. I no longer loved the bustle of New Providence or, for that matter, of London, or Mojave, or New York.

The child's illusions are the man's disappointments and I had had my full share.

There had been a marriage in Los Angeles. It lasted two trips. I wasn't an Earthman. I was a colonial Martian and the differences were too much to adjust. We parted bitter friends.

The cities of Earth were crowded, noisy, frenetic. The blue sky was there, but it had to be seen from a rising Wheel taxi or a high mountain because of the pall of smog and grime. The people were confused, rapacious, and ambitious. For what, I could never understand. For *more*, perhaps. But as I say, I was a colonial. There are things I do not value.

It may be that in the back mind was the hope that birth would give me something to believe in.

The Old City had not changed. It was still a wretched rash of hovels, a festering hole on the dry face of Mars. The shanties were built right down to the highwater mark on the canal bank, and the whole area stank of industrial refuse.

I walked through the narrow streets followed by a band of ragged urchins who stared at my uniform and occasionally darted up to beg for a few coins. This was a thing unique to colonial Mars. The poor of Earth didn't beg. No one would have listened to them.

The house, if you can call it that, where I was born, was on the far outskirts of Dumptown. I saw it again with mixed emotions.

I had hated this place as a child, but now, as a man, I hated it more because I had been abroad and I knew there was no place really very different. The hopelessness of that made my feelings venomous.

There was a boy with Timur in the shanty when I stepped through the half-open door. The boy looked at my uniform with hungry eyes and then ran, scuttling through the door without

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touching me and vanishing amid the slagheaps. Some unwanted brat dropped by one of the women from across the canal and brought to Dumptown to be sold. Timur must have taken him as a substitute pair of eyes. It could have been worse. In many cases it was. Vice was a principal industry in the Old City.

There was an animal smell in the cold room. My father sat in his ancient chair near the open window, listening to the distant roar of Bessemer steel converters across the canal.

I thought of my four brothers, and of our name being synonymous everywhere in space with murder and sabotage. And this made me speak without compassion, even though I could see that Timur was very old and obviously failing.

"Timur—" For some reason I could not call him "father." "Timur," I said. "Dennison is dead."

The blind eyes turned toward me and I shuddered. The ravaged face was terrible to see. He sighed and the sound was like the long-remembered whispering of the marswind. I was, for an instant, a child again and lying on my pallet in this very room and listening to the voice of Mars drifting on the cold wind from the north.

"Did you hear me? I said Dennison is dead."

"I heard," he said.

I could sense it already, that differentness, that feeling of alien presence.

"They say he wrecked his own ship," I said bitterly.

"I know," Timur said. "Is that why you have come back? You ran away before I could teach you. I had four sons and they are all gone now."

I hated him suddenly, the stink of him, and the calm way he disowned me, and above all I hated the gray memories that bound me to him and to my four dead brothers, memories that would not let me turn away now and accept his disownment.

"Answer me," he said slowly. "Have you come back because Dennison is dead and now there's only you?"

It seemed that senility had claimed him at last as he answered his own question in a rasping voice.

"Yes, you've come back."

He rustled drily, searching for me with his hands. "Welcome home, son," he said.

His touch revolted me. It was the touch of something

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out of my childhood. The fear of the ancient past, of the ruined temples, of the masks and carvings.

God, I thought, how I despise this place. The oily smell of it, the gritty taste of mines and smelters and the red-black soot of collieries and the darkness of burrows shored with timbers looted from ruins as old as time. I despise the heavy smoke in air that's too thin to support it, and the crummy shacks of mineworkers and steelworkers, the trapped poverty of it. I hate the marred, scarred face of the whole miserable dead and should be buried planet—

Earth was bad enough. But *this*. It was as though I were seeing Mars for the first time and it was hideous.

"Dennison," the old man said in a whisper. "Oh, I had hopes for Dennison— He must have tried very hard."

I stared at him unbelieving.

"But now you've come back."

My mind recoiled from what I had been thinking. It was too grotesque and too senseless.

I looked around me at the books piled everywhere and covered with reddish dust. At the carvings and figurines salvaged from the sand-drifted temples. It suddenly occurred to me that the room's arrangement was, how can I put it, subtly unearthly. Arranged in a way no terrestrial would arrange it.

"I won't be here for long," I said violently. "Nothing could keep me in this God-forsaken place."

"You were born here," the old man said. "This is your home."

I laughed at that. "Home is where the heart is."

Outside the shanty it lay, this home of mine, under the blanket of a deepening night. The smoke obscured the stars, and from the ground beneath us came the rumblings of drilling and blasting. Across the silted canal the lights of New Providence—those lights that had beckoned to me when I was a child, the city we terrestrials had built on the rubble of temples and unearthly castles. The ginmills were running full blast for the crew of my ship and the thin wind carried the shouts and rowdy laughter, the frontier-bordertown medley of cursing, brawling, catting noises. From the spaceport came the whine of turbines and the roar of jets being tested.

And I saw it all for what it was: the wanton rape of a world.

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Presently, Timur spoke. "Is it ugly, son?"

"It's filthy," I said with feeling.

"It wasn't ugly when I first came here. I still see it the way it was."

This was the pioneer speaking, I thought sadly. The First Lander. I turned away from the door and sat down wearily on the bed. "I need a drink," I said.

Timur's blind eyes seemed to be looking inward. "I'm old, son. Too old now to take you to the temple in the hills. It's been years since I've been there. But if I could, if I could call them to me here—Oh, I could show you Mars as it was. As it should be."

I wondered at his turn of phrase. If I could call them here to me—

It started a strange train of thought in my mind. In a sense *they*, the Martians still did exist. They were memory, and fragments buried under tons of ferric sand, and the marswind mourning.

They existed for Timur as surely as I did. No, more surely than I did. He could see them with that inward-turning sight of the blind.

And I wondered what he had experienced during those two years alone with my mother, alone on this silent, ancient world.

A terrestrial had once said: I think, therefore I am. Couldn't *they* say: We are remembered, therefore we are? The ultimate application of the Berkleyan philosophy. The very endpoint of evolution. A kind of incorporeal immortality.

The idea opened up a frightening vista of a world populated by slumbering memories rudely awakened by the advent of invaders from space. What would these memorial beings desire? Peace. For eternity.

I shivered and rubbed my cold hands together.

The old man nodded. "It's in the blood," he said. "It's happening to you."

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said roughly. "I'm going. Write to me if there is anything you want. I'll try and get it to you." I stood up.

"A favor, David, before you go." It was the first time he had called me by name.

"What is it?"

"You used to read to me. Before Mark died, and the others."

"I remember."

"Find the book and do it now."

And childhood memories

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possessed me again and I could not refuse him. It was all there in my mind, waiting to be recalled.

I went to the cluttered shelves and searched the dusty volumes there. I found it. A thin book, very old, by a woman named Stella. The golden letters of the last name had long ago flaked away. The place was even marked by a ribbon that crumbled at my touch. It had seen much use.

Timur followed my movements with that arcane sensitivity of the blind.

"Oh bless your blindness," he quoted before I could begin, *"Oh bless your blindness, glory in your groping—"*

I glanced at him and saw his raddled old face transfigured.

I read the verse aloud and finished with the lines I best remembered.

"Go forth, go forth, nor ask me what comes after; The fifth stone shall not fail you, son of mine—"

I stood for a long moment, holding the book and trying to read the expression on my father's face. He seemed to be listening to voices I could not hear. Tears streaked his cheeks. "They've come," he said softly. "Thank God."

I thought, he's gone mad. He hears the ghosts of a race a million years vanished.

And then he began to speak, with a voice that was not his own. A voice so gently timbred, so delicately modulated, that I had the feeling my ears were not fine enough instruments to accept one-tenth of its immense expressiveness.

"Mars was not always as you see it now," the voice said. My father took my arm like one possessed. And I knew that I was listening to the voice of a race gone but not destroyed. "Let me show you Mars—"

And I saw it. I saw the world before the coming of men. I saw the red hills, slumbrous and old under a daylight sky full of stars. I walked under the two moons and watched the shifting shadows on the sand. I saw flying towers too delicate to stand on any planet's breast but this, towers and needle spires soaring like birds in flight. There were ice clouds glare white with sun against a sky the color of cobalt. There was music, intricate and stately rhythms and tones like crystals drifting on the mars-wind. The canals rippled in sunlight, the deep still water bluegreen at midday. And I

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was there and not dreaming, because I saw my own face in the mirror depths, and behind me fleeting glimpses of lacey figures dancing in woven robes of silver so thin it floated on the air, and the laughing faces hidden behind masks of beaten bronze. I touched the icy water. I stood on the ochre moss and the white rime lay on the ground and it crunched beneath my feet.

I thought wonderingly, this, then was the world Timur found during those two years, the world beyond the curtain of his blindness and the ravaging of time and progress. I could not think how it was done, nor did I care.

I watched the seasons turn and when summer came and the lichens turned to rusty crimson, the tides, deep and full, swelled the canals, and the moss turned green on the ancient ground, nourished by the clean, clear blood of the silent planet—

My inward vision faltered. I had not dreamed that Mars was like that once. It was as though the dreamer had touched the face of the dream and must weep. It was all there, everything I had ever longed for. The stars in a cupped hand.

"You saw," my father said. The voice was his own.

"Yes," I said. "Oh, God, yes."

"They still live, you see. In the hills, in the snowfields. Everywhere."

I sat down abruptly, because my legs were tired and trembling.

"What can we know of the evolution of an alien race?" he asked quietly. "What can we know about them at all?"

"That was what you showed my brothers," I said.

"Yes."

"That was what I ran away from."

"I'm sorry, David."

I sat silently, containing the ache of longing in my chest.

"Now look at your Mars," Timur said harshly.

And I saw the smoke again, and the ginmills, the filthy refuse. I felt myself crumbling inside. "I don't know. I don't know at all. It's our way—"

I broke off suddenly because I realized that it wasn't *our* way. It was *their* way. And once I knew that, I knew what it was I must do. What Dennison, and Mark, and the others had tried to do.

I slipped the book I still held in my hand into my

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pocket. I was the fifth stone.

"We will not meet again," Timur said sadly.

"No," I said.

"You've listened to them," my father said. "They will be with you always."

I walked out into the night. Across the water and the city I could see the wide winged shape of my ship being hoisted into take-off position.

Calder sat quite still in the darkness of his room. The recorder shut itself off.

Bits of the here-and-now impinged on his consciousness. The old man had flung five stones. No, not just the old man. *They* had done it. To get their world back.

Even that wasn't quite right. *They* and Timur and his five dead sons were one.

He felt himself stiffen with fright. He heard Timur telling David: They will be with you always."

Then they were here.

Here, he thought. With me. Now.

No, not *with* me. I am Timur Denby. I am David and all his brothers.

I am one of them.

Total transference. They had bridged the gulf.

But everything has a function, Calder thought. David completed his. What is mine?

In the sky he saw the rain of meteors that had been falling for two days, ever since Captain David Denby had rammed his ship into the space-station.

Not only had the men on the Wheel died, but New Providence would have to be abandoned, because although ships could fly from Mars to Earth, they could not fly from Earth to Mars without the Wheel.

What was Calder's function?

Guardian.

But of what, and how?

His eyes left the sky and caught the brilliantly lighted machine-shops and construction sheds where already the long, long task of building another Wheel was underway.

He understood.

He would teach others.

The Mars colony was finished. Another Wheel would never be launched.

Calder looked back at the sky with longing. The red eye of Mars gleamed low on the horizon. He thought of the silent lichen-covered rocks and the deep cool waters of the canals with sadness.

For nothing is accomplished without sacrifice.

He would never go home.

THE END

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COWARD'S DEATH

When Shakespeare said, "A coward dies many times before his death," he wasn't fooling. Here is one of the ways it can be done.

By
IVAR
JORGENSEN

WHAT was that word again?"

Dave Lowell grinned, and tugged a lock of hair over his forehead. "Deincarnation," he said. "I know it sounds crazy. But I don't know how else to describe the damn thing."

Barrett Marks, sitting cross-legged in Dave's cozy parlor, and feeling cold and isolated despite the warmth and homey quality of the room, sipped on his highball and said nothing. He looked at Dave's comfortable image through the bottom of his glass, and was interested to note how the sight of it still increased the acid content of his stomach. It had been ten years since he had seen him, not since their first job after college, but he found it easy to stir up the old fire of hate among the ashes of the past.

"It's been my pet project since we graduated," Dave said. "You remember all those talks we had, about time travel and the paradoxes involved—"

"Yes, sure," Barrett said smoothly. "You were always pretty hipped on the subject, Dave."

The other man scowled wryly. "Say, just listen to me. Here I am, beating your ears about that silly gadget of mine, and you haven't said a word about yourself. What's been happening to you, Barrett?"

"Oh, nothing much." He put down the glass, and took a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket. It was a costly brand, and he placed it face up on

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She lunged, screaming, with the scissors.

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the table after lighting one. "Been working for Clifton Laboratories. Matter of fact —" he puffed airily— "just been made director of their electronic components division."

"No fooling? Hey, that's great, Barrett!" Dave reached across and pummeled the other's knee. He didn't see the wince it produced on Barrett's face.

"Of course," Barrett said, his thin, dark face barely hiding his bitterness, "that's nothing to what you've accomplished, Dave. I mean, you're a famous scientist now—"

Dave made a gesture with his hand, a familiar deprecating gesture. Barrett remembered it, and hated it. That was the way Dave Lowell had always been—smug, sickeningly modest, cocksure of his abilities. It had all come easy to him; he was born with the talent, born to mathematical perplexities and esoteric theories. It had never been a struggle for Dave, as it had been for him. And the past ten years seemed to have changed nothing.

"Well, go on, fella," Dave said. "Tell me about the job. Doing anything interesting?"

"Nothing that would interest a big brain like you." Barrett forced a chuckle. "I'm more of a white-collar boy now. What they call an executive."

"Oh." Dave's eyes went blank at the word, and Barrett thought: *I hate you more than ever, Lowell . . .*

Dave refilled Barrett's glass. "Sure sorry Janet's not home. She'd get a kick out of meeting you. I've told her all about you, you know."

"Yes," Barrett said dryly. "I would like to meet her."

"She ought to be back any minute. You know how women are when it comes to shopping."

"Yes," Barrett said, sipping his drink. "But let's hear about this machine of yours, Dave. Sounds fascinating. You mean you've actually sent things into the past?"

"Yes and no," Dave said. "I haven't been able to send through any inanimate objects. That's what I tried to do first, but with no luck. I thought the gadget was a failure, until my cat, Cicero, got into the main chamber by mistake. The next thing I knew —whoosh."

"Are you sure she's in the past? I mean, how can you tell?"

"I couldn't. That was the worst part. She just van-

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ished, like that famous Cheshire cat. I got all kinds of mental pictures of her appearing mysteriously in someplace like ancient Egypt. I even thought she might have accounted for their cat worship." He laughed. "It's amazing how many screwy ideas I got. But then I thought about it, sensibly. I remembered everything I used to say about the paradoxes of time travel. I reasoned that it just couldn't be the answer."

"Oh? Then what is the answer?"

"I didn't know," Dave said. He leaned back in his chair, and his face grew suddenly grave. "Not until last month."

"What happened then?"

"I tried the machine on myself."

Barrett lit another cigarette. *He'll make a million dollars and they'll call him a genius,* he thought. *He tinkers around in the basement and comes up with a toy, and they'll call him a genius . . .*

"What happened?" he said finally.

"It was the damnest thing. I mean the *damnest.* I went back into Time, all right. Only not as Dave Lowell—not in Dave Lowell's body, anyway. The first thing I knew, I was in the middle of a cobblestone street. A coach and four almost ran me down. I scrambled for safety, and a man in knee breeches and a powdered wig came running up to me, saying 'You all right, Noah? You all right?' "

"Noah?"

"That was my name. Noah. I was in England, in a town called Hereford Mill, and I was a man called Noah Bridges. It was the eighteenth century."

"Now really!"

"It was true. The man helped me to my lodgings. When I was alone, I examined myself in the glass. I was a tall, gawky gentleman, practically bald, with a face as sad as an undertaker's. But the funniest thing of all was my leg—"

"Your leg?"

"Yes. I had a bruise the size of a quarter on my right knee. And this is the strange part. Only ten minutes before—in the laboratory downstairs—I had bumped against a table and bruised my knee. I didn't give the blow any thought—until I found it on Noah Bridge's body."

Barrett lit another cigarette, and his hand wasn't steady. "What happened next?"

"I didn't know what to do. I was in a panic, believe me.

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I had no idea how I would ever return to the present. I stayed in my room in the lodging house, practically in a state of hysteria. Then I went out into the street, to learn more about my new identity."

Dave's forehead was dampening. He brushed at the moisture with his shirtsleeve.

"I didn't get the opportunity. No sooner did I hit the street than I was attacked by a spell of dizziness. I saw stars, pinwheels, just like in the funny papers. And then I woke up—"

"Back in the laboratory?"

"No! In a rice field, in some oriental country. Don't ask me where; I still don't know. It might have been anyplace: China, Japan, even Russia. It was in the body of a peasant, of a common laborer. I staggered around the field like a madman, and then I had one sane thought. To look at my leg."

"The bruise?"

"It was there, all right. On the knee. It was my one connection with reality. It saved me from certain madness, Barrett, so help me—"

"Listen, Dave. This wouldn't be some kind of joke?"

"I'm serious. So help me, Barrett. That machine—*deincarnated* me through some fifteen bodies of the past. Don't ask me how, or why—I don't know! I only know that it was a sheer miracle that this—this *thing* let go of me at last, and I was allowed to return back here. I can't tell you how many prayers of thankfulness I gave, Barrett. I was never much on religion. But believe me—I was on my knees, saying thank you, God, thank you."

Barrett was silent, watching Dave's disturbed face.

"It was only a few days ago that I discovered what the miracle was," Dave said softly. "I went to the laboratory for the first time since it happened, and looked the gadget over. I found that one of the main tubes had given out. I calculated that it had occurred just about the time I got back to the present. If it hadn't been for that defective tube—"

"And what about this deincarnation machine? Are you going to break it up for scrap now?"

"I don't know." Dave looked at the floor, his brow furrowed. "After what it did to me, I'm tempted. But as a scientist—no, Barrett. I can't do any such thing. I've replaced the bad tube. The device is in

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perfect order. Now I'm going to turn it over to the Institute, and let them decide what to do."

Barrett stood up, adjusting the sharp creases of his well-cut trousers. "So? You don't suppose you're going to get off showing this monster to me?"

Dave laughed. "Not if you insist. But you know the way you are, Barrett. It's a heck of a complex gadget. You'll just get rattled at the sight of it."

Barrett's face burned. "Oh, I don't know. Try me."

They went into the basement laboratory of Dave Lowell's home. There was no sign of orderliness in the jumble of paraphernalia that crowded the room; it was nothing like the spotless laboratories over which Barrett Marks presided. His lip curled, and he rubbed dust from his fingertips with disdain.

"Here's the baby," Dave said cheerfully, and Barrett's face became unreadable. It *was* too complex for his understanding, but he would never let his bafflement show before Dave Lowell. He examined the platform in the center of the device, and Dave said: "Here's where I stood, right in the center of the light beam cast by these tubes. Wait. I'll give you a demonstration."

Barrett watched while Dave went to a table and reached into a murky fish tank. He returned with a small turtle in his hand, the head and legs swimming in the air. He placed the turtle on the platform of the machine, and snapped a switch. Then some further adjustments were made on a control panel, and a beam of pale blue light struck the horny shell.

"Keep watching," Dave said.

The turtle was gone.

"Where?" Barrett said, eyes wide.

"I told you," Dave chuckled. "Back to the past—probably into the body of some poor fifteenth century tortoise. It won't be so bad for him."

Barrett shook his head. "A miracle," he said wonderingly. "There's no doubt about it. You've made a miracle, Dave."

"Maybe. Only I'm through with this miracle now. Let the Institute play with it for a while. Let them figure out what to do with the thing."

The idea struck Barrett with such force that his mind was still exploring it while his tongue gave it a name.

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"Dave!" he said fiercely. "Give me the machine!"

"What?"

"You don't want it. It's just a toy for you! Isn't that right?"

"Well, I dunno, Barrett. It's no vital project, sure. But—"

"Then give it to me! Let me have it to work on. Perhaps I can solve its problems. Perhaps I can contribute something—"

"You?" Dave's voice carried no contempt. It was matter-of-fact.

"Why not?" Barrett said angrily. "Are you so sure I couldn't? Do you think I'm an idiot?"

"I didn't say that."

"Then give me the machine! Let me see what I can do with it. You know I've always wanted something like this, Dave. Always, all my life. One important scientific project—one major work. You can understand that."

"Sure I do. But I think the Institute—"

"The Institute's a graveyard! They won't care about its possibilities as I will. I'll make something of this, Dave. You'll see. Something vital. Something important." His voice rose to a shout. "Something they'll remember!"

Dave looked at the man's livid face for a long while before answering. His brows wrinkled, and he shook his head in perplexity.

"Gosh, Barrett. I'm sorry. But the answer is no."

He turned to the stairs, and it was the sight of his retreating back that inflamed Barrett Marks even more than the placid smugness of his face. The fingers of his right hand curled in perfect receptivity for a weapon, and then his eyes found one. A gleaming chromium rod, leaning aimlessly against a dustladen box of spare parts. He grasped it, and the rod described a parabola of reflected light as it arched and crashed on the right temple of Dave Lowell's head. He crumped silently, without even a moan.

Barrett stared at his handiwork, and regretted the impulse at once. He bent over Dave, speaking words of sorrow and reconciliation. Then he saw the blood welling through the V-shaped wound on the side of his head, and realized that Dave wasn't hearing his plea for forgiveness.

"Oh, God, God," he said aloud.

The prayer reminded him of something. Of Dave's story. Of the machine, whose

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central blue beam was still playing on the empty surface of the platform.

He placed both hands beneath Dave's shoulders and dragged him towards the deincarnation device. It was heavy work, and it took many anxious minutes to place the man's stocky body on the platform.

The pale beam washed over it.

The blood oozing from the V-shaped wound was strangely purple.

Then Dave Lowell was gone.

A woman screamed at the top of the basement steps.

The sound stabbed through Barrett, and he recoiled with actual pain. Then his eyes traveled up the staircase, and saw a short, dark woman, with her hands covering her face. Her eyes burned through the spaces between her fingers, and they were accusing. It was only then that Barrett realized that Dave Lowell's wife had been a witness to his crime.

He stared at her imploringly, and said: "Please—listen to me—"

She moaned in her throat, and started for the door. Frightened, Barrett flew up the stairs after her. He caught her struggling with the knob.

"Don't!" he said. "Listen to me! It was an accident, a pure accident—"

"Let go of me!" she sobbed. "You killed him! You killed Dave!"

"No! It was an accident. He fell into the machine—"

She grew limp in his grasp, overcome by her sorrow. He stood holding her arms, helplessly, wondering what to do next. If she had seen what had happened, he was lost. There would be accusations, police, a trial, and then—

"Let me explain," he said. "Let me show you how it happened. Please!"

She looked at him dumbly. "All right."

He held her to the base of the stairs, moving her before him like some will-less mannikin. He brought her to the glowing deincarnation machine, and gestured towards the mechanism.

"He was showing me how it worked. He stepped into the light beam—"

Quickly, while her eyes were focused on the pale blue spotlight that shone on nothingness, he brought her thin arms behind her back. She screamed in sudden understanding of his intentions, and strength seemed to surge

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into her muscles. She broke from his grasp, and ran shrieking to the other side of the room.

"No," he said, moving towards her. "I wasn't going to hurt you. I was just showing you—"

"Don't come near me!" She backed up against the side of a laboratory table. Her hands scrabbled through the debris, and came forth with a pair of long-bladed scissors. She held it in front of her, as Barrett moved relentlessly forward. "Don't touch me!" she cried.

"You've got to understand!" Barrett shouted.

Then he rushed her.

The scissors flashed in an underhanded arc, the blades like the beak of some vicious bird of prey. Barrett felt only a thud in his midsection as the blades drove into his flesh. For a moment, it was as if nothing had changed.

Then he saw the horror on his face, and realized that a death blow had been struck him. With the realization came the pain. He staggered backwards, his eyes gaping with disbelief at the jagged wound this frail girl had given him in her fright and anger. His hands closed over it, but without halting the rush of life's blood that was staining his clothing.

He fell to the floor, feeling dreamy and detached, his thoughts idle and meandering. He heard the woman's footsteps vanish up the stairway, but it no longer mattered. He had never thought much about death before. Now that the moment was upon him, its importance seemed to have been greatly overrated. He looked around the room with casual interest, and even smiled faintly when he saw the blue glow of the machine which had brought his life to this unexpected end.

Then he was afraid. So afraid that his body trembled violently from one end to the other. His eyes stared into the approaching darkness, and he was terrified. He was splashed with something icy-cold over his skin, and it was his own sweat.

He was afraid! Terribly afraid! He didn't want to die!

Agonizingly, he crawled. Painfully, moving his throbbing body with only the strength in his hands, he pulled himself across the laboratory floor.

With one great surge of dying effort, he flung himself into the path of the blue light.

. . . he was walking in a forest, and the branches of the trees were strangely sing-

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ed and leafless. A haze lay over everything, and he could barely make out the figures trudging in front of him in single file, moving slowly, with weary feet.

He dropped the object that was in his hand, and it fell in the dust. Someone cursed behind him, and he turned to face the bearded man in the peaked metal helmet. The man wore crossed white patches on his red-and-blue uniform, and he was carrying a musket. He said something in gutteral German and Barrett opened his mouth without making a reply.

He stooped down and retrieved his own weapon while the Hessian troops filed by, not looking at him twice. *It's happened,* he thought with wild joy. *It's happened! I'm in the past—but I'm alive! Who would believe it!*

He began to stumble along the footpath once more, but this time he had lost sight of the last member of the entourage. He called out to them.

A whistle sounded behind him.

He whirled.

A man with a green jacket was sliding from a treetop. There was a feather stuck jauntily in his cap. An axe swung from the belt around his waist, and his hand was closed around a knife.

"Listen to me!" Barrett shouted.

But the man wasn't listening. He dove for Barrett with the agility of a panther, and his left arm tightened beneath his neck. Then the knife was swooping in the air.

"No!" Barrett cried.

The blade struck home, ripping through his midsection, bringing back the pain and the fear and the terror . . .

. . . he was cold.

The sky was wide, and the wind was fierce and violent around his naked chest. He looked up at the rolling clouds overhead, and then over the plains to the gently rolling hills beyond.

He tried to move, but found that his arms had been secured to a post. *I'm alive!* he thought. *I'm alive! But where?*

He craned his neck to the right, and saw the object standing in horrible juxtaposition. Another post, with the sagging figure of a man strapped around it. A man whose body was broken and bleeding, the crimson bright on his blue trousers with its broad white stripe.

And further off, to his

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right, still another figure, in the same broken posture.

"Where am I?" he shouted.

The wind roared back.

Then the thunder started. It began on the ground, beneath his feet. A beating, throbbing noise, shaking the very grass. It grew louder with every passing second, until the source of the thunder came into his line of vision.

They were mounted figures, a ragged line of them. They were strangely decorated, their faces painted, their anger and savagery evident in the wild motions of their arms.

They rode swiftly by the bodies of the imprisoned dead, but reined their horses at the sight of Barrett's frightened eyes and writhing motions.

The first horseman threw back his feathered mane and shouted something. A young brave laughed, and lifted his spear high.

"No!" Barrett shouted, as if the word could stop its flight.

The spear whined, and the point tore through him, rending flesh, exploding pain and fear in his mind . . .

. . . he was watching the dance of flames within a great stone fireplace, sitting back in a comfortable wooden armchair, his booted legs before him.

He stared at the gleaming leather on his feet, and breathed a sigh of relief. He was still alive! He wasn't dead!

Barrett looked down at his strange costume, trying to place it in history. There was a frilly jabot beneath his chin, and lace at his wrists. A long row of brass buttons extended from his collar to his knees.

He stood up, cautiously, and looked around the room. It was completely foreign.

"Nay, ye dinna hear me, Maury Scott?"

There were faces watching him, studying him. There was tension in these peaceful surroundings. He looked at the speaker, a hot-eyed youth with thick black hair, standing in the center of the tavern floor, sturdy legs set wide apart.

"Speak up, mon! Speak in your defense!"

Barrett swallowed. "I—I don't know what you mean."

The crowd growled.

"So? Ye dinna ken my meaning? And ye dinna ken my sister's meaning, ay? But perhaps ye ken this, Maury Scott—"

The boy dived for him, and

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Barrett flung his hands in the air.

"No!" he shouted. "You're making a mistake! I don't even know your sister—"

"Ye black-hearted liar!"

The firelight shone on the dirk in the boy's hand, and then the blade was buried deep.

Barrett screamed. Everything went black.

. . . he was under a clouded sky, but the hidden sun was warm on his skin. A stocky brown figure, thrusting forth a large oblong shield, was circling him, stalking him. There was a plumed helmet on his head, and the visor was closed over his features. In his right hand flashed a short sword.

Barrett looked down at his own body. It was a large body, strongly muscled, draped in a short tunic. In his right hand he carried an iron cast-net; in his left, a wicked trident.

He backed away, and looked wildly at his surroundings, already guessing where the deincarnation process had delivered him—into the arena of ancient Rome.

He moved away from the circling figure before him, lowering the weapons in his hands. The crowd roared their disapproval, like a frustrated beast.

The short blade of his opponent whistled in the air.

"No, please," Barrett moaned. "You don't understand . . ."

The brown figure came closer, the sword uplifted.

"Please! Don't—" He raised the trident in defense, and the sword crashed down, sending it spinning from his hand. The crowd screamed with pleasure. Then the sword flailed out again, the flat of the weapon catching him on the side of the neck. He fell to the ground, and the gladiator was kneeling on his body, his weight crushing the breath from him.

Then the gladiator arose. He looked towards the stands, where a grinning man in a toga was leaning forward with bright-eyed eagerness.

He knew what would happen now. He knew what the judgment would be: the downward motion of the emperor's thumbs, the descending point of the gladiator's sword, the terrible moment of pain, and then the blackness and the fear . . .

And Barrett knew that the cycle would go—forever, into a never-ending hell of plunging metal—into an eternity of deaths.

THE END

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CHOKE CHAIN

By
ROBERT
SILVERBERG

They had no trouble in getting food and clothing and shelter — but what was the price of air?

CALLISTO was supposed to have been just a lark for me, a pleasant stopoff where I could kill time and work up the courage to tackle the big task—Jupiter. I felt that exploring the big, heavy planet was, well, maybe not so grand a thing as my destiny, but yet something I *had* to do.

There was only one trouble: the immenseness of Jupiter's unknown wastes scared me. Fear was a new sensation for me. I got as far as Jupiter's moon Ganymede, a thriving world bigger than Mercury, and suddenly, with great Jupiter looming overhead in the sky like a bloated overripe tomato, I knew I wasn't ready for it. I've been to a lot of places and done a lot of things, and this was the first time I'd ever drawn back from an adventure.

I dallied on Ganymede for a couple of days, not knowing quite where to turn. Then one night in a bar someone hinted to me that something funny might be going on on Jupiter's largest moon, Callisto, and I set my sights there.

It seemed Callisto had recently clamped down on tourists, had booted out a couple of newspapermen, and had done some other mighty peculiar things, and rumors were spreading wildly about what might be taking place there.

It looked like a fine idea, at the time: go to Callisto, find out what the trouble was, spend a few days putting things in order. It was the kind of jaunt I thrive on, the sort of thing that's been my

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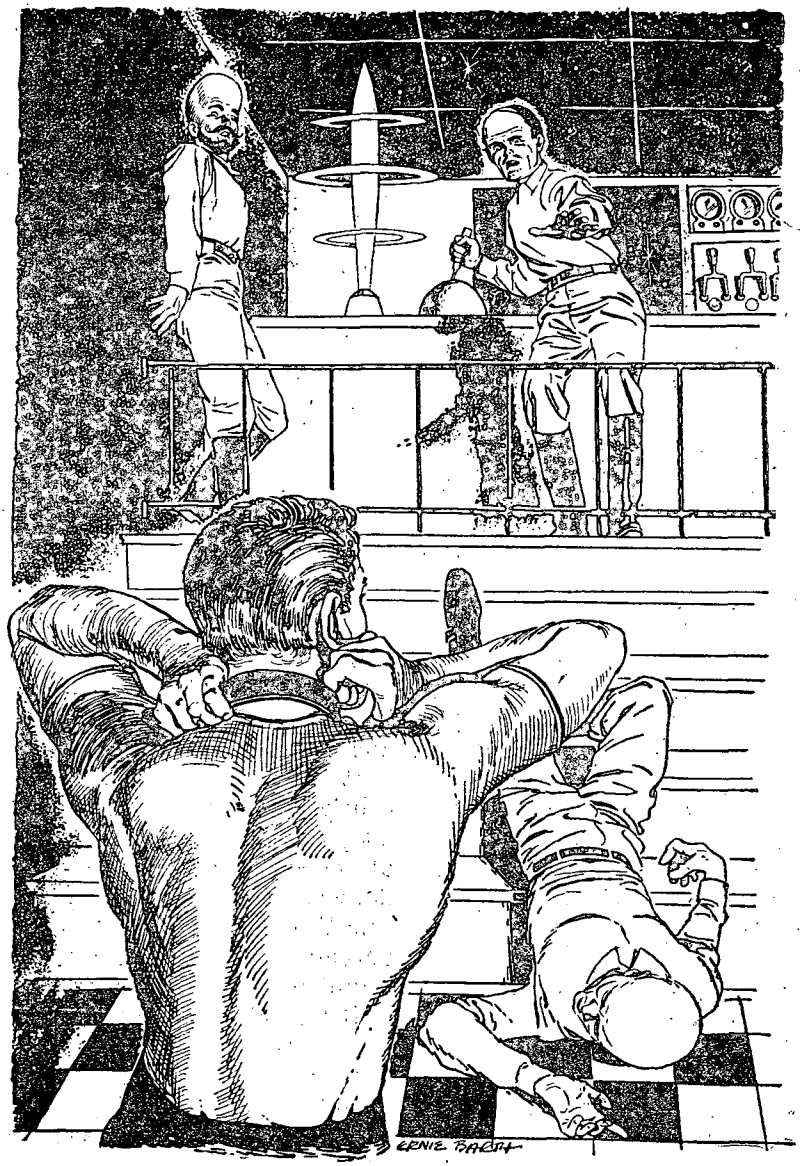

Slowly, he applied agonizing pressure.

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specialty since I began roaming the spaceways. By the time I was through on Callisto, I thought I'd have the blood flowing smoothly in my veins again, and I'd feel more like tackling the Big Project: Jupiter.

Only Callisto wasn't the picnic I thought it would be. It turned out to be something more than a refresher for weary adventurers. I found that out as soon as I got there.

It had been rough to get a passport, but I finally signed on a slow tug as a mechanic, and that was good enough to get me a landing permit for Callisto.

I helped pilot a tugload of heavy crates from Ganymede to its nearby twin moon, Callisto. I didn't know what was in the crates, I didn't ask, and I didn't care. The job was getting me to the place I wanted to get to, and that was what counted.

We reached the satellite in a couple of days, and the skipper put the ship down in a vast, wind-swept desert of blue-white ammonia snow. As soon as we were down, the captain radioed Callisto City to let them know we were here.

Callisto City is a giant dome, a plastine bubble that covers a fair-sized chunk of Callisto and houses several tens of thousands of colonists. We were outside it, in the snow.

I waited impatiently, staring out the port of the ship at the empty swirls of snow, watching a little convoy of trucks come crawling out of Callisto City like so many black bugs and go rolling through the snow to meet us.

Then they arrived. A gong sounded, and I heard the captain yell, "Into your spacesuits, on the double! Let's get the cargo loaded extra quick."

We suited up, and by that time the trucks had arrived. We loaded our cargo aboard them, and one by one they started back to the dome. That was all there was to it. No contact between Callistans and outsiders at all.

When the last crate was swung aboard the last truck, the captain said, "Get back in and let's blast off!"

I turned to him. "I'm not going. I'm resigning, sir."

He looked at me blankly, as if I'd just said, "I'm dead, sir." Finally he said, "You're *what?*"

I nodded. "I'm quitting. Right here and now. I'm going to grab one of these cargo trucks back to Callisto City."

"You can't leave in the

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middle of a trip!" he protested. He went on objecting, violently, until I quietly told him he could pocket the rest of my uncollected wages. At that he shut up in a hurry, and gestured for me to get going. These guys are all alike. They won't accept anything they don't like.

I climbed into the rear truck of the convoy, and the startled driver looked at me wideyed.

"What the hell are you, buddy? There's nothing about you on my cargo invoice."

"I'm just going along for the ride, friend," I told him softly. "I'm a sight-seer. I want to get a look at your fair city."

"But you can't—" he objected. I jabbed him in the ribs, once, in exactly the right place, and he subsided immediately.

"Okay, buddy," he grunted. "Lay off. I'll take you—but remember, it's only because you forced me." He wrinkled his brow in puzzlement. "But it's beyond me why in blazes anyone would *want* to get to Callisto that bad—when we'd all give our left ears to get away."

"It's my business," I said.

"Sure, sure," he said placatingly, afraid of another poke. "Do whatever you damned please. But it's your funeral—remember that."

I smiled to myself, and watched the shining dome of Callisto City grow nearer. I was wondering what was going on beneath that peaceful-looking arc of plastine. It didn't sound very good.

Finally we reached the city, and the truck edged carefully into the airlock. My helmet-window went foggy as the icy air of outside was replaced by the warm atmosphere of Callisto City, and then I saw my fellow truck-drivers climbing down and getting out of their spacesuits, in obvious relief at being able to shuck the bulky, uncomfortable things.

As I slid out of mine, I noticed one very strange thing. All the truck-drivers—every last one—wore curious golden collars around their necks. The collars were almost like dog-collars, thick, made of what looked like burnished bronze. They seemed oddly flexible and solid at the same time, and set in the middle of each was a little meter that kept clicking away, recording some kind of data.

I looked around. There were twenty or thirty Callistans near me, and they all wore the collar. And they all wore the same facial expres-

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sion, too. The best way to describe it is to call it a *beaten* look. They were all beaten men, spiritless, frightened—of what?

The intense fluorescent lights from above glinted brightly off the collars. Was wearing them some kind of local custom, I wondered? Or a protection against something?

I heard low whispering coming from them as they stowed their spacesuits in dull-green lockers ranged along the side of the airlock, and headed back toward their trucks. They were all looking at me, and obviously they were commenting on the fact that I didn't have any collar. They seemed shocked at that, and very worried.

"What's this collar business?" I asked the driver of my truck, as we moved through the inner lock and into the city proper.

"You'll find out, chum. Just make sure you can run fast when they spot you, though."

"When who spots me?"

"The guards, dope. The Tax Agents. You don't think you can breath for free on Callisto, do you?"

"You mean they *tax your breathing?*" I asked, incredulously, and before I could get an answer I saw a cordon of guards forming around our truck.

There were half a dozen of them, burly men in blue uniforms, all of them wearing the ubiquitous metal collar. They had halted our truck, which had been last in the procession. I saw the other trucks in the convoy rolling on toward their destination somewhere in the city.

"Don't make trouble for me," my driver said pleadingly. "I'll be docked if I don't get my cargo back on time."

One of the men in uniform reached up and opened the cab of the truck. "Come on out of there, you."

"Who, me?" I asked innocently. "What for?"

"Don't play games," he snapped. "Get out of that truck." He waved a lethal-looking blaster at me, and I decided not to argue with it. I leaped lightly to the ground, and as I did so the uniformed man signalled to my driver that he could go ahead.

The six men ringed threateningly around me. "Who are you?" the leader demanded. "Where'd you come from?"

"That doesn't matter," I said belligerently. He put his hand on my arm, and I jerked away. "I'm a tourist. Want to see my landing permit?"

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"Landing permits don't mean a thing here," he said. "Where's your respirometer?"

"My *what?*"

"According to Statute 1106A, Book Eleven, Civil Code of the Principality of Callisto City," he reeled off, "all inhabitants of the Principality of Callisto City are required by law to wear respirometers at all times, whether they are transients or permanent inhabitants." He finished his spiel and gestured boredly to one of his assistants. "Give him the collar, Mack."

The man named Mack opened a wooden box and revealed one of those metal collars, the kind that seemed to be all the rage in Callisto just then. He held it out invitingly and insistently.

"Here you are, dear. The finest model in the house."

I drew back. "I don't want your damn collar," I snapped hotly.

"You've heard the regulation," the head man said. "Either you put the collar on or you turn around and walk out the way you came."

I turned and looked through the translucent airlock out at the barren wastes of frozen ammonia. "I'm staying here, for the time being. And I don't plan on wearing any collars."

He frowned. I was being particularly troublesome, and he didn't like it. He waved his blaster in an offhand gesture. "Put the collar on him, boys."

Mack and one of the others advanced toward me, holding the gleaming metal circlet. I took one look at it, smiled, and said, "Okay. I know when I'm licked. I can't fight all of you."

They relaxed visibly. "Good to see you cooperate. Put it on him."

I let them come close, and Mack was starting to lower the thing over my head when I went into action. I batted the collar out of his hands and heard it go clanging across the floor, and at the same time I lashed out with my foot and nipped the boss' blaster right out of his amazed hand. The gun went flying thirty feet or more.

Then they were all on me at once. I pounded back savagely, feeling solid flesh beneath my knuckles and occasionally the unyielding coldness of someone's collar as I drove a fist past it into his jaw.

Some picnic, I thought, as I waded gleefully in, flatten-

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ing Mack with a poke in the stomach and sending another one reeling to the ground with a swift kick. Luckily for me, the head man had been the only one wearing sidearms—and apparently some street urchin had made off with the blaster before he could find it again, because I wasn't getting cooked.

I crashed two of them together, pushed the remaining two aside, and dashed away toward the entrance to the city. I heard them pounding after me in hot pursuit.

It was about a hundred yards to the edge of the city. I made the dash in a dozen seconds and found myself in a crowded thoroughfare, with a number of people watching my flight with evident interest.

I broke into the crowd and kept on running, pushing people aside as I went. Behind me, I could see the six policemen jostling their way along. One of them had found another blaster somewhere, but he didn't dare use it in such a crowd.

I rounded a corner, nearly slipped, and then doubled back and headed for the main thoroughfare again. The cops weren't taken in by my maneuver, and when I looked back I saw them following grimly, shouting something at me. There were more of them now.

Suddenly I felt a hand slide into mine, soft and warm, and a gentle voice at my side said, "Come with me."

I didn't argue. I saw the crowd close up into a solid mass behind us, and heard the roaring of my frustrated pursuers, as my unknown rescuer led me away to safety.

As we ran, I glanced down and saw a girl at my side, with her hand grasping mine. She was about twenty-two, wearing a clinging blue tunic that cut off above her knees. She had copper-red hair, and around her neck was that curious collar.

After running a block and a half, we came to a small tenement-house of the kind common in Callisto City. "In here," she whispered, and we ducked inside.

Then up a flight of stairs, around a corridor, down a dimly-lit hallway. We stood for an anxious moment outside her door, while she fumbled nervously in an attempt to touch her thumb to the doorplate, and then finally she managed to impress her print on the sensitive photo-electronic plate and the door slid noiselessly open.

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We stepped inside, and with a feeling of relief I watched the heavy door roll back. I was safe—for now.

I turned to the girl. "Who are you? Why'd you bring me here?"

The run had tired her. Her breasts rose and fell as she gasped for breath, and she smiled and held up a hand for time as she struggled to talk. Finally, panting, she managed to say, "I'm June Knight. I saw the whole scene with the guards. You're safe here, for a while. But tell me—why have you come to Callisto?"

"Why does everyone wear these collars?" I countered, ignoring her question.

Her pretty face grew sad. "They make us—the Three, that is. Come on inside, and I'll get together something for you to eat. You must be starved, and we can talk later."

"No," I said quickly. "I'm not hungry. I'm more anxious to find out what's been happening here."

"Well, even if you're not hungry, I am," she said. "Come into the kitchen and I'll tell you the whole story—the story of how this whole city's been enslaved."

She went into the adjoining room of the little flat, and I followed her. She punched keys on the robocook, dialing a small but nutritious meal, and when the food was placed before her on the table she turned to me.

"First," she said, "When's the last time any news came from Callisto to the outside world?"

I shrugged. "I haven't been keeping up with the news. I've been on Mars the last two years, hunting *rhuud* in the lowlands. The papers don't get there often."

"Oh. You've been out of touch. Well, you've missed no news from Callisto, because we've had an efficient news blanket in operation for almost a year and a half. And for a while it was a voluntary one—just about two years ago, when the air started going bad. We didn't want outsiders to know."

I blinked. "The *air?*" In a dome-city like this, the air supply was, of course, wholly artificial, and its proper maintenance was of vital importance to the entire community. "What happened to the air?" I asked.

"I'm not sure," she said. "None of us are. Suddenly it became impure. People began sickening by the hundreds; some died, and almost everyone else was ill in one way

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or another. A tremendous investigation was held by the people who were our government then—Cleve Coldridge was our mayor, a fine man—and nothing could be determined about the source of the impurities. And then my father—he's dead now—invented this." She tapped the metal collar she wore around her throat.

"And what, may I ask, is that collar?"

"It's a filter," she said. "When the collar is worn, it counteracts the impurities in the air, through some process I don't understand. My father died shortly after he developed it, and so he didn't get a chance to offer it to the public. He willed the design and the process to three—friends—of his." Her mouth clamped together bitterly, and I saw her struggling to fight back tears. Almost automatically, I put my arm around her.

"I'll be all right," she said. "Every time I think of those three, and what they've done to Dad's invention—"

"Tell me about it later, if you want."

"No. You might as well know the whole story. The three of them—Martin Hawkins, an Earthman, Ku Sui, a Martian, and Kolgar Novin, a Venusian—announced my father's device to the public as if they had discovered it themselves. It was the solution to our air-impurity problem. They started turning out the collars in mass production, and within a month everyone in Callisto City was wearing one."

"Did that stop the sickness?"

She nodded. "Immediately. The hospitals emptied out in no time at all, and there hasn't been a case of that disease since then."

"Is that all?" I asked.

"Hardly. The trouble didn't start until after we were all wearing the collars." She took my hand and guided it along her collar to the back of her neck, where I felt a tiny joint in the metal.

"What's that?" I asked.

"That joint is the weapon those three hold over us at all times. These collars, you see, can be tightened at will, by remote control—and my father's three friends operate the controls!"

I whistled. What a hideous kind of dictatorship!

"You mean—anyone who makes too much of the wrong kind of noise gets his collar tightened."

"Exactly. As soon as the

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whole city was wearing the protective collars—the collars that we thought were our salvation—the Three called a public meeting, and announced that they were taking over the government. Mayor Coldridge stood up to protest such a high-handed move—"

"And suddenly felt his collar tightening around his neck!" I concluded. I could picture the scene vividly.

"It was terrible," she said. "Right in the middle of his speech, he clutched at his throat, went red in the face, and sank to his knees. They let him up after a minute or so, and explained what they had done. Then they announced that anyone who protested against what they were doing would get similar treatment. We've been helpless against them ever since."

I stood up, almost overwhelmed with anger. I had come to the right place this time; Maybe giant Jupiter was something I needed to explore someday for my own peace of mind, but this mess on Callisto required immediate attention. I didn't see how I was going to fight it, either, but I swore to myself that I wasn't going to leave here until the last collar had been removed from a Callistan throat.

"What's about this breathing-tax?" I asked.

She nodded. "That's the latest thing. They've decided the regular taxes aren't enough for them, and so they're bleeding us white with this new one. They installed meters in all the collars, to measure the amount of air we consume, and—" her voice was choked with hatred—"they tax us. There's even a price of air here. Every Friday, we have to pay a certain amount."

"And if you don't?"

She put her hand to her throat, and made a swift squeezing motion. I shuddered. I'd never come across anything so vicious as this. When I was hunting *rhuud* on Mars, I thought I was up against an ugly beast—but those Martian land-serpents weren't half so cold-blooded as the Three who held Callisto in their iron grasp.

I was going to break their hold. I vowed it, as I looked at the red-eyed girl staring solemnly at me.

Suddenly there was a knock on the hall door. I sprang up at once, and June looked at me with alarm.

"Hide in there," she said, pointing to the bedroom. I dashed inside and crouched

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behind the bed, wondering who was at the door.

I heard a male voice say, "It's me, June. You decent?"

"Come on in," she said, and I heard the door slide open. I peeped out and saw a tall, good-looking young man enter. Around his throat was the inevitable collar. He ran to her, put his arms around her, embraced her. I felt a sour twinge of jealousy, though I had no conceivable right to.

"Hello, Jim," she said warmly.

The newcomer was frowning worriedly. "Have you heard about this new trouble?" he asked without preamble. "They've just announced it from the capitol building."

"What is it?"

"There's a fugitive loose in the city somewhere," the man named Jim said rapidly. "Apparently he broke in by stowing away in a cargo shipment from Ganymede, and he escaped when Hawkins' guards tried to put a collar on him. He's been at large for the past half hour—and Ku Sui and Hawkins have just announced that they're going to start tightening the collars gradually until he turns himself in!"

June gasped. "Everyone's collar?"

"Everyone. There's a gigantic manhunt going on now, with the whole city out trying to find this guy. If we don't get him and turn him in, those three madmen are liable to choke us all as a punitive measure."

As he spoke, he winced and put his hand to his throat. "They're starting now!"

A moment later, June uttered a little cry as the remote-control torturers went to work on her collar as well. I went almost insane with rage at that.

I got off the floor and went inside.

"I'm the man they're looking for," I announced loudly. Jim turned, startled, and flicked a glance from me to June and back to me again.

"Where'd *he* come from, June?" Jim asked coldly.

"He's the fugitive," she said hesitantly. "He was running from the Tax Guards and practically ran into me. I brought him here."

"Great Scott!" he shouted. "Of all the crazy stunts! Come on—let's turn him in before they choke us all!"

He started toward me, but I held up a hand. I'm a big man, and he stopped, giving me the respect my size de-

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serves. "Just one moment, friend. Don't be so quick to turn people in. Suppose you tell me who you are?"

"What does that matter to you?" he snapped.

"Jim's my brother," June said. "Have you heard what they're going to do unless they find you?"

I nodded grimly. "I heard you talking from inside."

"I'm going to call the guards," Jim said. "We can't let you roam around free while our lives are at danger. It's for the good of the whole city."

He moved toward the phone, but I tripped him and shoved him into a chair. "Hold on a second, buddy."

He popped up almost immediately and came at me with a savage right. I heard June utter a little scream as his fist caught me off-guard and cracked into my jaw; I backed up a step or two, shaking off the grogginess, and hit him carefully just below the heart. He folded up and dropped back into the chair.

"Sorry, June," I said apologetically. "But I have to have this thing done my way."

Jim opened one eye, then another, and sat there without making any further disturbance. "June, get your video on. Find out if what your brother says is true."

"Can't you believe me?" he asked.

"No." I told him bluntly. I wasn't taking any chances.

June was fumbling with the dials of her video, and a moment later a newscaster's face came on the screen. I listened stonily as he proceeded to give my discription, or a rough approximation thereof, and repeated "President" Hawkins' bone-chilling threat that the collars would be gradually tightened unless I was turned in.

"Okay," I said. "I've heard enough. Shut that thing off." I whirled and faced them. Both June and her brother were pale-faced and frightened; they wore the same beaten, cowed look I'd noticed on the truckdrivers. This was a city of perpetual terror.

"Look," I told them. "I'm going to turn myself in, as soon as possible."

"But—" June started weakly to say.

"No. There's nothing else I can do. I'm going to turn myself in and let them put a collar around my neck." The worlds came tumbling out easily, and I was forming my plan even as I spoke.

"Why don't you just escape through the airlock?" June

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asked. "Go back where you came from. You can still get away, and you won't have to wear the collar."

I shook my head firmly. "No. Two reasons. The first is that your benevolent administrators may take punitive measures against you anyway; the second is that you're suggesting I run away—and I just don't believe in running away. I'm going to stay here till the job is done."

Jim Knight stood up and took my hand. "I'm sorry I got so hotheaded before, fellow. But why'd you knock me down when I went to the phone?"

"I wanted to tell you some things first, Jim. I'm sorry I had to rough you up, but it was necessary. There was one plan I had to let you know."

"Which is?"

"I'm going to go to the capitol building now to get collared. I want you two to go gather up all your friends and see to it that there's a considerable mob outside the building after I go in. Get the whole populace down, if possible. I don't know if I can carry off what I'm planning, but I'll need help on the follow-through if I do."

"Right. Anything else?"

I rubbed my throat speculatively. "No. Nothing else. How does it feel to wear one of those things?"

I stepped hesitantly into the street, expecting to be grabbed at any moment. The artificial air of Callisto City was warm and mild, and the atomic furnace that heated the domed city was doing a good job. But I detected a curious odor in the air, and my sensitive nostrils told me that whatever had been polluting the air was still present. June had said it wasn't fatal, and with my strength I knew I wouldn't have much to fear for a while, so I didn't worry about it.

I got about four steps down the street, walking by myself. I had insisted that June and her brother keep away from me, for fear they'd get involved as accomplices. I reached the corner and started up the thoroughfare, and at once a dozen hands grabbed me.

"There he is!" someone said.

"Thank God we've caught him before these collars got any tighter!"

I looked at them. They weren't wearing uniforms; they were just townfolk, honest, worried men who turned into vigilantes only to save their own necks. I pitied them.

"I'm the man you're look-

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ing for," I said. "You can let go of me. I won't run away."

The mob was getting bigger by the moment, and I was anxious to calm them down before they started transfering some of their hatred for their three tyrants to me, and ripped me apart in a mob's wild, illogical way.

"I'm going to turn myself in," I assured them hastily. "Where do I go?"

"To the capitol building," someone said. "And you'd better get there in a hurry. You know what they're going to do to us if you're not found?"

"I've heard," I said. "That's why I'm turning myself in. Take me to wherever I'm supposed to go."

A couple of them led me through the streets, with the rest tagging along behind. The poor, timid, frightened people! I was almost ready to explode with indignation; I felt I wanted to tear their unspeakable overlords apart with my bare hands.

And I could do it, too.

Finally we reached the capitol—a lofty affair that towered right up to the highest point of the great dome. I looked up. The dome formed a shining arc that covered the entire city; outside, beyond the dome, all was black, except for the swollen red orb of Jupiter hanging monstrously in the sky.

Jupiter. I wondered if I was ever going to get out of Callisto City to cross the gulf of space to the planet that seemed to beckon to me, the unexplored giant that called to me from afar.

"Here he is," one of my captors said, to a guard at the capitol door.

I recognized him. He was the leader of the group of six who had originally tried to stop me back at the airlock. He gestured with his arm, and a whole host of blue-clad guards came forth and seized me roughly.

"Bring him inside," he said. "Hawkins is waiting to see him."

I was waiting to see Hawkins, too. I wanted to see just what sort of monster was capable of enslaving a whole city this way.

They led me through the richly-appointed lobby, hung with luxurious furnishings from every planet, no doubt imported at fantastic cost with money wrung from the Callistans by the infamous breathing-tax, and bustled me into an elevator. We shot up rapidly to the twelfth floor, where I was shoved out.

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I submitted as patiently as I could to this sort of treatment; if I wanted to, I could have smashed their faces and escaped with ease, but that kind of answer didn't suit me.

I was taken down a long, well-lit corridor, and pushed into a large room that seemed to be completely lined with machinery. A row of dials and clicking computers ran down one wall, and a giant electronic brain sprawled ominously over the entire back half of the room. Up at the left side were two men, seated in lofty chairs surrounded by metal railings.

One was a Martian, spindly, elongated, with a weirdly-inflated chest and thick, leathery reddish skin. The other was an Earthman, small in stature, balding, totally ordinary-looking. There was something familiar-looking about both of them.

The Earthman, who must have been Hawkins, turned to the other—evidently Ku Sui, the Martian, the second of the triumvirate that ruled Calisto.

"Here's our troublemaker," Hawkins said. "Let's collar him before he can do any damage."

The Martian got off his throne-like chair and came rustling down to examine me at close range. They have notoriously poor eyesight. As he drew near, I recognized him, and a moment later he spotted me.

He turned in surprise to Hawkins. "You know who this is?" he asked sibilantly. "This is our old friend Slade."

Hawkins was up from his chair in a second. *"Slade?"* I saw him go pale. "Get that collar on him as fast as you can!"

It came back to me now. Hawkins, and Ku Sui, and yes, the Venusian Kolgar Novin. I should have remembered as soon as June told me their names. Yes, we were old friends. Someone who leads the kind of life I do tends to forget some of his earlier adventures; they get blurred under the successive impressions of later encounters. But I recalled these three, now, and how I had foiled them, some ten years ago.

"Now I remember you," I said, as Ku Sui came toward me holding an ominous-looking collar. "Remember the Pluto Mines, and the neat slave-trade you three were running out there? I chased you out of there fast enough!"

"You were a considerable nuisance," Hawkins said.

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"But I think we have you in a better position now."

I nodded. "This dog-collar racket is the best thing you've come up with yet. And you're just vile enough to be operating something like this. I notice you three don't wear collars."

"The air-pollution does not affect us," Hawkins said. "But I don't intend to stand around discussing things with you." He seemed quite distressed that the two guards who pinioned my arms were overhearing my recollections of the Pluto Mines incident. "Collar him, Ku Sui."

"Here you are," the Martian said, rustling dryly like the remnant of a past age he was. "Extra large, to fit your bull neck." He lifted the collar and brought it down around my throat. At last, I had forfeited my liberty, at least for the time being.

The collar was cold and somehow slimy. I made up my mind not to wear it for long.

"How does it feel, Slade?" Hawkins asked tauntingly.

"It's a good fit," I said.

"You can go now," Hawkins said to the guards. "He's amply under control." They nodded and backed out, and I was free. Just the two of them, and me, in the room with the machines. As they left, the door in the back opened and Kolgar Novin, the Venusian, entered. Now they were all three together.

Hawkins left his throne and crossed the room to a control panel. "Now you're a taxpayer, just like the rest, Slade."

"I hear the price of air's pretty high in these parts," I said wryly, rubbing my finger around the collar.

Hawkins nodded. "We get a good rate for it."

"And what if I don't care to pay?"

Hawkins smiled. "We have methods of persuasion," he said. "I was just about to demonstrate one of our best."

He reached for a switch and nudged it down. Immediately that damnable collar tightened like a deadly hand around my neck. I felt the pressure increase.

"How do you like that, Slade?"

I didn't. But I didn't tell him that. I had decided the time had come for action. I flicked out my hands and drew the startled Martian, Ku Sui, toward me. Apparently the collar was such a foolproof protective device that they had gotten careless, for Ku Sui had been standing within my reach all the time Hawkins was talking.

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I sensed the dry, alien smell of the Martian, who was gesturing wildly to Hawkins. I got my hands around the Martian's scrawny throat.

"Now *I've* got a collar on you!" I said. "And it doesn't operate by remote control! How does it feel?"

"Hawkins — increase the pressure," Ku Sui grated brokenly. "*Kill him,* Hawkins. He's . . . choking . . . me!"

I looked up from the Martian and shouted at Hawkins, Shut your machine off! Get the pressure down or I'll kill Ku Sui!"

The grip of the collar around my throat was almost unbearable. I flexed my neck muscles and tried to fight the slowly intensifying grip of the collar, but my face was fiery red and I was having trouble breathing. I could hear the sound of my blood pounding through my veins.

"Shut it off, Hawkins! I'll strangle the Martian!"

It was a mistake on my part to assume that Hawkins gave the faintest damn about what happened to his partner in crime. I kept increasing my grip on Ku Sui's throat, and Hawkins up there at his control board kept tightening his grip on mine. Everything was starting to swim around my head, and I didn't know how much longer I could hold out.

"*Don't . . . call . . . my . . . bluff,*" I gasped. I wrung Ku Sui's leathery neck and hurled the corpse across the room at the motionless Venusian standing bewildered in the back. Venusians have a way of freezing up when there's trouble, and I was thankful Kolgar Novin wasn't taking a hand in the action.

I saw Hawkins through a red haze. He was obviously surprised that I still hadn't succumbed to the choking, but he didn't seem very disturbed about Ku Sui. I gasped in as much air as I could and began the slow, leaden-footed climb up the steps to the control panel.

I saw Hawkins go white with fear as I approached. I was moving slowly, deliberately, my head swimming and my eyes popping from my head.

"Why don't you drop?" he asked in terror. "Why don't you choke?"

"I'm too tough for you!" I said. He started to scream for the guards, but I reached up, plucked him away from his control panel, and hurled him over the railing into the middle of the floor. He went flying heels over head like a

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chubby basketball, and bounced on the concrete.

He continued to moan loudly for his guards, and Kolgar Novin was still a statue at the far end of the room.

Desperately, I reached for the lever he had been pushing down and I hurled it as far up as it would go. The collar opened immediately, and the air went rushing into my lungs. I reeled against the railing, trying to recover, as the blood left my head and the room tilted crazily around me.

Then I heard footsteps outside, and the door broke open. The Guards! I made up my mind what I was going to do in an instant.

I started smashing my fists into the delicate machinery, raging up and down the room destroying whatever I could. I ripped up the intricate wiring and watched blue sparks lick through the bowels of the giant electronic brain and the smaller computers, watched the whole edifice of terror come crashing down. I pulled out levers and used them as clubs to bash in the dials and vernier gauges, and when I was through I turned to see what the guards were doing.

To my surprise, I saw they were struggling among themselves. They were divided—half of them, the most evil half, were still loyal to Hawkins, while the others, the native Callistans impressed into the guards, were rebelling now that they saw the overlords were destroyed, their machines of coercion in rubble. I saw one guard rip off his collar and hurl it into the ruined machines with a shout of savage glee.

There still was a nucleus of guards clustered around Hawkins and Ku Sui, but their numbers were growing smaller as more and more of them realized the game was up for the three tyrants.

Then the room was suddenly crowded, and I smiled happily. June and her brother had roused the people! They were coming! I leaned against the railing, weak with strain, and watched as the angry, newly-free Callistans swept the remaining guards out of the way and exacted a terrible revenge on Hawkins and Kolgar Novin and even the dead body of Ku Sui.

The lynching was over eventually, and the guards, taking charge in the name of the people, managed to restore some semblance of order. Blankets were thrown over the mutilated bodies on the floor.

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Then, the grim methodicality, the Callistans completed the job of wrecking Hawkins' machines. The room was a shambles by the time they were through.

June finally made her way through the confusion to my side. She looked up in concern, and ran her fingers gently over the angry red lines the collar had left on my throat.

"You were wonderful," she said. She was crying from relief and gratitude, and I took her in my arms and held her.

Then I released her. "Let's go downstairs," I said. "I need some fresh air after that battle."

We left the building and I stood in the warm artificial sunlight of Callisto City, recovering my strength.

"I've heard how you overthrew them," June said. "But I don't understand how you survived the choking."

"I'm stubborn," I said simply. I was hiding the truth from her—the bitter truth that I wanted no one to know. "I just wouldn't let them strangle me, that's all." I grinned.

She took a deep breath. "You know, I just thought of something—we're not wearing collars, and yet we don't mind the air! It's not polluted any more!"

I stopped to consider that, and then shook my head in disgust as the obvious answer came to me. "Those worms! You know what was causing the pollution?"

"No," she said, puzzled. "What?"

"It must have been maintained artificially by one of those machines up there! I remember, now — Hawkins was quite a chemist. He must have synthesized some chemical that polluted the air, and then gave your father enough leads so he could develop a filter to counteract it. It was a devilishly well-planned scheme, neatly calculated to reduce Callisto City to a state of servitude!"

We took a few steps away. It was bright midday, but I could see the bulk of Jupiter high in the sky above the dome. In the great square in front of the capitol building, a huge golden mountain was growing—a heap of discarded collars, getting bigger and bigger by the moment as the Callistans hurled the impotent symbols of their slavery into the junkheap. For the first time, I saw smiling, happy faces on Callisto. The air was pure again, and the time

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of troubles was over. It didn't cost anything to breathe on Callisto any more.

The happiest face of all was June's. She was beaming radiantly, glowing with pride and happiness. "I'm glad I decided to rescue you," she said. "You looked so brave, and strong, and—lonely. So I took a chance and pulled you away."

I looked at her sadly, not saying anything.

"Where will you stay?" she asked. "There's a flat available next door to mine—"

I shook my head. "No. I'm leaving. I must leave immediately."

The sunshine left her face at once, and she looked at me in surprise and shock. *"Leaving?"*

I nodded. "I can't stay here, June. I've done my job, and I'm going."

I didn't wait for another word. I strode away, and she took a couple of steps after me and then stopped. I heard her sobbing, but I didn't turn back. How could I tell her that I loved her? How could I dare to love her? Me—an android. A laboratory creation? Sure, I was stronger than a human being—the factor Hawkins didn't figure on. Only an android could have withstood that choking. I have human drives, human ambitions. When you cut me, I bleed red. You can only tell by microscopic analysis that I'm not human. But resemblance isn't enough. I couldn't fool myself, and I wouldn't fool June. I couldn't allow her to waste herself on something like me. She'd make a good mother, someday.

I turned away, feeling bitter and empty, and made my way through the streets crowded with jubilant Callistans. In my mind's eye I could see June's pale, bewildered face, and my synthetic heart wept for her. She'd never understand why I was leaving.

I looked up through the dome at the black curtain of the skies, at mighty, lonely, unapproachable Jupiter. It was a fitting challenge for me. We had a lot in common, big Jupiter and I. I knew where I was going, now, and I couldn't wait to get there.

THE END

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THE CHIMP

By
HENRY SLESAR

Maybe we don't want to go to Mars at all. Maybe the overtouted Red Planet is strictly for organ grinders.

AND still it seems ignoble," wrote first mate Ben Hilary in his diary, *"that the first creature to set foot on the soil of Mars should be only a man-to-be (if Darwin was right) instead of a fully-evolved specimen of Earth's highest form of life."*

Carefully closing his notebook, Hilary turned and looked into the Monkey's red-rimmed eyes.

"Look at the beast," said McCullen. The second mate was sitting on his bunk. "Like a man hunting fleas."

Hilary grunted.

"It's a jackass idea," said McCullen. "I spent four years working on this ship. I've made this trip a hundred times. I've stepped out on the surface of Mars as often."

"But it was all in the lab."

"Sure it was! But with every condition duplicated, every probability taken into account. We don't need any damn monkey to lead us."

Captain Samuel Beer's lean figure floated through the doorway. He smiled. "The Monkey again?"

McCullen tenderly placed

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his micrometer into a leather case. "The rabbits died," he said. "Just what I predicted. Now the whole adventure goes to the Monk." He snorted and spread out on the bed.

The captain smiled. "Scientists!" he said. He went to his bunk, clamped himself to the rail, and started to untie his shoelaces.

Hilary watched him. "So?"

"Supposed to have a good sense of relative values," said Beer.

"What's relative values got to do with that ape?"

"Simple." The captain swung his legs onto the bed. "You work, plan, sweat, study for years. You prepare so thoroughly that the simplest part of your project is the actual voyage. And that's the true attitude of science. But now what's happened? A quarrel over feet!"

"It's more than that, Captain—"

"That's all it is, Hilary. The biggest issue on this ship is 'whose feet first?' You'd think Mars was Grauman's Chinese."

"That's *not* the point!" Hilary had spoken with more vehemence than he had intended. "The point is that we don't need this flea-bitten monkey on Mars any more than we need a bicycle. We've got ten thousand blasted instruments to survey the place before we drop anchor."

"We've talked this out before," said the Captain wearily. "But I'll say it again, Hilary." He sat up. "You're right," he said to both crewmen. "Then thousand blasted instruments. Every analytical gadget we could steal, borrow, or invent. In all probability, we could dump you fellows out on the surface and everything would be great. But we're not going to do it."

"Chip, chip, chip," said the Monkey.

"Shut up," said McCullen.

"Did you feed him?" said the Captain, turning to the second mate.

"He ate like a pig."

"Anyway," said the Captain, picking up the thread of his thoughts, "we're not going to take that chance, and because of X."

"Hah!" came from Hilary. "Sounds like Algebra. Must be a cue." The first mate came to life, floated into sitting position, and clapped his hands on his knees. He turned an exaggerated scowl on McCullen and intoned gravely: "X, Mr. McCullen, is what marks the spot. X is also the Roman numeral ten. X is also —and listen carefully—the

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unknown quantity. And *that*, my friend, is what Captain Beer is expecting to kill our friend, the Monkey. Am I right, Captain?"

The Captain didn't smile at Hilary, nor did he seem annoyed. "Not at all," he replied mildly. "I don't expect the chimp to die. I don't expect any of us will be endangering our life." He filled his pipe, closing the lid quickly to keep the shreds of tobacco from drifting away. "However, even if the possibility of peril was so small that you couldn't measure it on your micrometer of yours, McCullen—why take the risk? This isn't just another dark continent, you know. This is an alien world, and our conception of danger may not suit Mars at all." When the Captain had his pipe lit, he lay back on his bed again, puffing cheerfully. "And it's such an infinitesmal hurt to man's ego! I think we can sustain it."

Hilary and McCullen looked at each other unhappily.

"This journey has been so closely calculated," wrote Ben Hilary, *"that it has become dull. Therefore, it was even with some relief that we greeted the unfortunate calamity that took place today. No, it wasn't a stray meteor, but that I think that event would have caused less noise, caterwauling, confusion, and disorder than what did happen. The Monkey b r o k e loose."*

"Oh, you abysmal son of a savage!" said McCullen, waving a compass in the face of the chimpanzee. "You black-hearted, unthinking, unfeeling imitation of a man!"

"Let him alone," said Hilary impatiently, looking up from his notebook.

McCullen whirled angrily. "You and your precious diary weren't manhandled by this beast. Have you seen what he's done to my instruments?"

"I know," said Hilary, sighing.

"The rabbits had to die. This jungle monster had to live. Rabbits, at least, are edible."

"Give me gas," said Hilary.

"I'd love to," said McCullen.

"Very funny."

Hilary shut his notebook. As he did, he noticed a projecting slip of paper. He removed it curiously, and read the words on it twice.

"Forget the Monkey for a minute and look at this," he said.

McCullen came to his side. "I thought I saw Miller fum-

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bling around here today. What's it say?" He picked up the message. It had been run off on the ship's mimeograph; and it read:

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT HAIRY FEET?

Some of us on the good ship Mars One feel rather strongly. If you are one of these, be informed that a nose-counting of Anti-H.F.'s will take place at 0800 in Locker Seven. A majority attendance will indicate the necessity for a plan of action. Come resolved. Burn this.

"What do you think?" asked Hilary.

"I think I'll have my nose counted," said McCullen, reaching for his lighter.

"The Best Foot Forward Paper," Hilary wrote in his diary, *"may never rank with the Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence, but then these documents were never drawn up by such a wag and scoundrel as Irving Muller, Fuel Engineer. But on his historic ship, the importance of the issue burns with all the zeal displayed at Runnymede and Philadelphia."*

Carefully, Hillary transcribed his copy of the Paper into his notebook.

BEST FOOT FORWARD

A Petition to the Hon. Captain Samuel M. Beer, Ph.D, A.A.P., A.A.A.S. from the officers and men of the good ship

MARS ONE

Be it hereby resolved that the following action be taken promptly and without delay for the following excellent and considered reasons:

1. In order that the hard-won supremacy of *Homo Sapiens* over all lower orders be not relinquished by a fraction; in order that Man's ascendancy over tooth and claw be properly maintained; in order that Man's dominion over Nature be not usurped in this noblest journey; and

2. In order that our good neighbor Mars feels first the touch of friendly boot; the tread of cautious feet; the fingers of dextrous hands; and

3. In order that some fairly chosen member of this great expedition represent his fellow humans in that glorious moment when Earth foot meets Martian soil; therefore

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4. We do summarily suggest, request, entreat, implore, and demand that present strategy be abandoned, present plans ignored, and new action, favorable to *Homo Sapiens,* be immediately entered into the landing agenda.

On this petition we do put our signatures.

"A TRUE BILL"

"The petition," wrote Hilary, *"was signed by everybody except half a dozen holdouts, three of whom had shipboard duties which would have kept them out of the landing party anyway. It was presented to the Captain on July 8. He read it over carefully, and chuckled. Then he said to McCullen: 'Tooth and claw, eh?' He chuckled again and slipped the paper into his log book. And that was the last we ever heard from him about the petition."*

It had been inaccurate of Hilary to describe Irving Muller as a Fuel Engineer. An essential requirement for a berth on Mars One was the ability to perform more than one necessary function. Irving Muller, in addition to his knowledge of fuel performance was also an accomplished cook. He was exercising this latter talent when McCullen had his Idea.

"What's that?" asked McCullen, as Muller dribbled a whitish powder into a steaming pot. He had been visiting the galley, glumly discussing the Monkey with the author of the Best Foot Forward paper.

"Egg concentrate," said Muller. "But don't confuse it with powdered egg. There's enough yolk and albumen in a gallon of this stuff to cover the whole of Mars with fried eggs. Guess you don't know much about our food system."

"Not much," McCullen admitted. "But it's good stuff, generally. Are *all* those containers full of concentrates?"

"Yep. Everything from applesauce to rhubarb."

"Rhubarb? Seriously?"

Muller quickly pulled a vial out of its pocket in the wall.

"Read the label," he said. "Rhubarb."

"Rhubarb," McCullen repeated thoughtfully. "Rhubarb. Rhubarb."

Said Muller: "What's on your mind, boy?"

"You're not a chemistry man, Muller?"

"Cooking is chemistry, some say. But otherwise, no. That's one of your tricks, isn't it?"

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"Yep." There was a little diamond gleam suddenly set in McCullen's eye. "And I remember something interesting about rhubarb. It contains a very nice acid. Oxalic acid. Very, very deadly."

"This is your idea of *nice?* Hey!" exclaimed the cook, as McCullen pocketed the vial. "You can't take that out of here!"

"All I want is a pinch of the stuff," said the other.

"But if it can be poisonous—"

"Not to you," said McCullen. "Not to any hairless thing on this good ship."

"Someone did a bad thing," wrote Hilary in his diary, *"and for the first time during our long cruise, Captain Beer is really angry. The bad thing was to smear some rhubarb concentrate on one of the Monkey's bananas. The Monkey ate the damned thing and was very unpleasantly sick. Jenkins, one of the ship doctors, said the stuff raised hell with the Monkey's bladder, but no one needed the doctor's diagnosis to find that out. The Captain has called the crew meeting in Locker Seven at 0900 today."*

"This won't take long," said Captain Beer to the officers and men of Mars One. "I have just two things to say to you all. This has never been a taut ship, and discipline has never been a problem. Nor did I, or the people who made this momentous voyage possible, ever believe it would be a problem.

"I know the situation concerning the chimpanzee has become something of a comical *cause célebre* with you men. I'll admit that I've never taken your gripes about our landing plan seriously. But yesterday, someone tried to to m u r d e r the Monkey—and murder isn't funny. Just as seriously, that attempted murder constitutes the first real breach of discipline aboard the ship, and I won't tolerate any more of it.

"So now hear this. No attempt will be made to discover the perpetrator of the attempted crime. He can be content with the knowledge that his courageous deed against this helpless animal has hardened my resolve to see the Monkey first on Mars. And first on Mars he'll be.

"Now for my second announcement. The Navigation Section informs me that we will be approaching our first landing phase in twenty-four hours. We will be on Mars in forty-eight, so prepare your-

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selves accordingly. That's all."

"*Forty-eight hours to Mars,*" wrote Hilary, "*and you could swear the Monkey is aware of the Captain's decision. A great quietus has come upon the animal. He's stopped rattling the bars, scratching, hooting, or doing most anything else. He sits in one corner of his cage, just waiting, as if he knew that the Captain has assured him his place in history. But the Anti-H.F. hasn't given up yet.*"

URGENT!
URGENT! URGENT!
The time for talk is past! The time for action is now! In thirty brief hours, hairy feet deflower the virgin Mars! If a man is to christen Mars, then it takes MEN to put him there! Urgent and secret meeting in Locker Seven at 0910! Be there! Burn this!

"There are thirty-six pieces of paper in here," said McCullen, shaking the globular helmet. "Only one of them has an X on it. The man who gets it does the deed and no argument, right? O.K., let's see who gets the honor."

The crew members shuffled their feet and glumly agreed.

"Pick," said Muller.

Hilary closed his eyes and lifted out a paper. "X again," he said before opening them. "That letter haunts my life." But his paper was blank.

After eight more drawings, botanist and soil engineer Tucker said: "I got it." Tucker was red-haired and freely freckled. His hands were big and bony, and his wide casual face was unfortunately simian. A lot of bad jokes had been the result of this resemblance; Tucker was a good man for the job.

"Let's have the gun," he said.

"Now hear this," said the voice throughout the ship. "We are approaching the final landing phase. Actual landing scheduled for approximately 2400. It is now 2300. All officers report to bridge for immediate briefing."

The first item on the agenda was a roll call.

"Stewart!"

"Here!"

"Temple!"

"Here!"

"Tucker! . . . Tucker! Is Tucker here? TUCKER!"

The Monkey wasn't crouching when Tucker came close to the bars. As if sensing the

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danger, it had begun a frantic pacing from one end to the other. He bared his teeth and pulled nervously at his brown fur. The chimp couldn't have known what a gun could do, but when Tucker fired, it found the sense to duck the speeding bullet. It crashed through the cage and went *spang!* against the bulkhead.

The noise echoed through the corridor. Captain Beer heard it as he came running towards the cage. Tucker didn't try to fire again. He put the gun on the floor, and it floated idly to the roof of the ship. The botanist-engineer waited calmly.

"Tucker is in the brig," wrote Hilary. *"The Captain didn't question him much; it's less than thirty minutes to landing time. Right now, you couldn't strike a match on this ship without setting it all ablaze. That's how high the tension's running."*

The Mars One landed.

The Monkey, now ludicrously strapped into its special space gear, chittered anxiously in its cage.

"Hilary!" the Captain's voice crackled through the silence as the crew watched. "Wheel the cage into position."

For a moment, Hilary thought it was going to be all right. Not a man moved as he started for the Monkey's cage. There wasn't a whisper as he pushed it into place before the door.

"The key," said the Captain.

The first mate handed him the key.

Then a man named Lewis, a short, stocky medicine-and-radio specialist, started it. He unstrapped the weapon from his gear arrangement and pointed it at Beer's chest.

"Don't get sore, Captain Beer," he said softly. "But we don't want the Monkey to go first."

The Captain seemed calm. "Put your weapon back, Lewis," he said smoothly. "We're writing history here. Let your grandchildren read good things about you."

"We feel it's our right," said McCullen, unstrapping his weapon. "We're going to draw lots for the privilege of stepping out there, but the Monkey doesn't get a draw."

Five other men had their guns pointed at the Captain now.

"Men, you're on edge," he said to them. "Put your guns back and we'll forget all about this."

"Stow the Monkey back of

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the ship, Captain," said Muller, "and the guns go back in the gear."

"The Monkey goes first," said the Captain. "You'll have to shoot me to make it otherwise."

"We won't shoot you, Captain Beer." Lewis walked to the door. "We'll draw lots like we said. You'll get a draw, too. After it's over, you're the Captain and your word goes. All we want is our privilege as men."

The Captain made an almost obscene sound. "Men?" he snorted. "You're acting like children! You've plagued and tortured this poor beast, and tried to kill it twice. Now you're ready to kill me, just for the 'privilege' of being first. All right!" he snapped, "draw your lots. But with your permission, I'll join the Monkey, gentlemen, and stay out of your little game. And I'll remain on this ship until you're ready for your hero's welcome back on Earth!"

He turned on his heel and walked off. His annoyance was painfully obvious.

"The conference lasted half an hour," wrote Hilary in his diary, *"and now the crewmen seem cool to the whole proposition. Another vote was cast, and Captain Beer won."*

The door swung open, slowly and with majesty, and in the blue-gray lights of Mars, the men's faces were etched sharply in wonder.

The first mate, Hilary, sprung the door of the cage.

The Monkey chittered and wheezed into the radiophone of his helmet, but he made no motion towards the cage opening.

Then, timidly, he crawled to the edge, and bared his gums at the unfamiliar landscape. Behind the Monkey, forty men held their breath.

The animal peered over the edge, appraising the drop. It was only a few feet.

Then he leaped.

The chimpanzee hit the surface of Mars lightly, and rolled like a ball of fur in its lesser gravity pull. A pale mist of orange dust swirled around him gently. He came to his feet, breathing heavily into the radiophone.

The Monkey looked around him.

He peered up at the strange sky.

He looked curiously at the orange and blue rocks surrounding him.

Then he looked at the blue-white figures in the doorway of the ship.

Then, a curious creature emerged from behind a ruddy

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boulder. Another followed it, then another.

Soon, there were a dozen of them, forming a semi-circle about the Monkey.

They were small, and blanketed with fur. They moved in a crouch, their long arms swinging at their sides, their knuckles scraping against the orange dust of the planet. They eyed him curiously.

Their lips were rubbery, and the noises they made were chittering, chattering sounds.

They closed in on the Monkey, while the beast returned their fascinating gaze. He scratched his underarm absently.

Then, with a loud hoot, the Monkey ran to join them.

They greeted him shyly, then joyfully. They leaped up and down and pummeled his brown fur. They tugged at the odd apparatus strapped to his back.

"Darwin!" said an awed voice back in the ship.

With one long, last look at the crew of the Mars One, the Monkey followed the happy Martians, and disappeared forever behind the rocky hills of the red planet. **THE END**

LOW MAN ON THE ASTEROID *(Continued from page 3)*

fifteen-hour day, and invariably a night's sleep regenerated our enthusiasm.

So PEN PALS, which began as a vague idea, will soon emerge as a smart, colorful magazine. The on-sale date is October 11. We feel all the problems got themselves well solved; and that you will find the answers interesting. So if you see a copy of PEN PALS on the newsstand, leave us thirty-five cents for our time and trouble and take a copy home with you. Because—even if you don't feel like writing a letter to anyone, we feel you'll still get more than your money's worth in good reading.

Martin Block, the famous disc jockey is one of our contributors. Countess Gosta Morner is represented with one of the funniest articles we've ever read. The lady knows how to write. So does Julie Adams, the leggy star of many movies. She tells about the people she's met through the mails.

So give PEN PALS a look. We're sure you won't be disappointed in the many features it contains.

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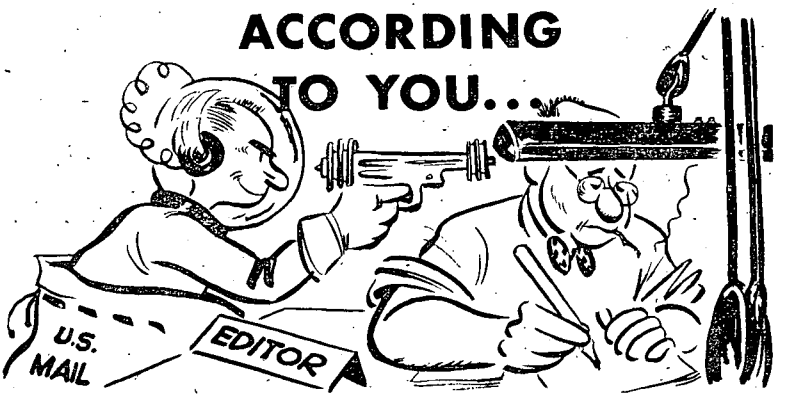

BY THE READERS

Dear Editor:

I am writing this letter in the hopes that some science-fiction enthusiasts my own age will read it and get in touch with me.

I am 15 years old, have been reading s-f since I was 12. But I have a problem. About all of the people I know think I am crazy because I like s-f, and no one I know is interested in it.

I hope this letter will put me in contact with fellow science-fiction followers.

Linda Sutton
427 N. E. Roselawn
Portland 11, Oregon

• *In the November issue of* Amazing Stories, *Linda, you will find just what you're looking for; a department called "The Space Club" in which will be listed the names of other fans like yourself who invite you to write to them and discuss science-fiction until your pens run dry. The November* Amazing Stories *will be on the stands Oct. 9. Watch for it—grab a copy—and you're in business.*—ED.

Dear Mr. Fairman:

"The Slow and the Dead" in the August issue of *Fantastic* presents one of the most refreshingly original, yet logically realistic, themes of any science-fiction story this year. A

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culture whose principles are based upon honor and a speedy draw, and the problems of investigating a murder in such a society without breaking through a suspect's integrity to start another duel, make for a very enjoyable novelette. To my way of thinking, this story represents just about the most skillful merger of the detective and science-fiction forms of writing since "The Caves of Steel."

Kent Moomaw
4722 Peabody Avenue
Cincinnati 27, Ohio

• *This is indeed a coincidence, Mr. Moomaw. That's exactly —practically word for word—what we thought about "The Slow And The Dead" when we bought it. So did the author.* —ED.

Dear Editor:

Upon tackling the stories in the August issue of *Fantastic,* I found them to be even better than the previous issue. Silverberg's "Guardian of the Crystal Gate" is just begging for a sequel. I want those Llanar guys to tremble!

Welcome back Robert Arnette. Boy, I remember a great story by him titled "Empire of Evil" back in 1952. Also glad to see E. K. Jarvis. Welcome back to space opera and welcome back the real FA!

Best of luck with the new *Dream World.*

Marty Fleischman
1247 Grant Avenue
Bronx 56, N. Y.

• *We remember "Empire of Evil," and feel that "Guardian of the Crystal Gate" is as good if not better. Maybe a sequel can be arranged.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

The October issue of *Fantastic* was excellent in its own weird way. How many of us want to do the impossible things to outdo his fellowman. Just as the numerous things you mentioned in your editorial. At least for the moment we can do it in the pages of *Fantastic.*

A new publication *Dream World* will have to go some to

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beat *Fantastic*, but we shall see. From what you stated the new magazine will take up where *Fantastic* leaves off. Then the latter will head back to space stories?

W. C. Brandt
Apt. N
1725 Seminary Ave.
Oakland 21, Calif.

• *We haven't quite decided where* Fantastic *will go after* Dream World *is launched. It may be issued as a rip-roaring science-fiction book. Or we may possibly pull a real surprise with it.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

Just got the new *Fantastic*, October. All I can say is WOW! I hope the next issue is as good as this one.

Philip Cote
3935 E. Martin Ave.
Cudahy, Wisc.

• *It will be much better, Mr. Cote.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

Just completed August *Fantastic*. The issue was really tops. "Revolt of the Synthetics" was the greatest and I also enjoyed "The Slow and the Dead," plus "Guardian of the Crystal Gate." Even my cousin who is not a fan liked "Growing Pains."

I am looking forward to the future issues of *Fantastic*.

Mary Miller
422 Timberwilde
Houston 24, Texas

• *We always like to hear of someone who is not a fan liking our stories. Usually, in that case, he or she becomes a fan and tells someone else. If this goes on long enough we'll wake up some morning and find ourselves a weekly.*—ED.

Dear Mr. Fairman:

I just spent one of the most enjoyable evenings I have had in a long time, reading the August *Fantastic*. Silverberg's

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"Guardian of the Crystal Gate" was indeed an entertaining story as far as it went. The ending, however, was a bit abrupt and left me with a dangling feeling. I hope there is some sequel to it.

James F. Williams
661 F. St., N.E.
Washington, D. C.

• *Everybody wants a sequel to the "Guardian—" Next time Bob Silverberg comes in, we'll mention it to him and see what he says.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

You know when *Fantastic* first came out it was in a class with many of the other top science-fiction magazines, straight s-f, and I thought it was good that way. At the time it was changed to the present form I disagreed, but now I am just beginning to see why it was revised. *Fantastic* can, in its present format cater to all ages, thus pleasing a much greater variety of people. If *Fantastic* had continued in the top hat and tails arrangement, it would soon have only a small specialized readership.

Roger A. Weir

• *We gave both* Fantastic *and its big brother,* Amazing Stories, *the top hat and tails treatment in 1953 and protests thundered in from all over the world. Our readers said: Get back to swift-paced drama and action! We did.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

I recently had the pleasure of enjoying one of the most exhilerating thrills of this lifetime. I chanced upon a copy of *Fantastic,* October issue. I had not seen a copy of this particularly wonderful magazine for some months past. Why had not someone informed me about the very satisfying revolution taking place in this best of all science fiction-fantasy magazines?

This is the most wonderful thing that has happened to science fiction-fantasy since it's inception. The type of stories you are now printing fills one of the most basic needs of mankind. That of true escapism.

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All of us daydream about acquiring new powers or wealth by which we may perform in a capacity long sought after and wished for. In your new kind of magazine, we suddenly find ourselves performing in those dreamed of capacities. Therefore, the projected title, *Dream World,* fits the magazine like a glove.

William B. Moore
14 East 111th St.
New York 29, N. Y.

● *Your enthusiasm is gratifying, sir, and it is evidently shared by many. Letters commenting on this new type of fiction have flooded in.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

Recently received the October issue of *Fantastic.* I have no ax to grind against the type of stories it contained. I read the magazine from cover to cover in one sitting (not much of a feat in this day and age) and was mildly amused with it. However, I enjoy science-fiction more than this light fantasy a la Thorne Smith and I hope that with the coming of *Dream World, Fantastic* will return to straight science-fiction.

Herbert Beach
210 West Paquin
Waterville, Minn.

● *In that case, Mr. Beach, we recommend to you,* Fantastic's *companion mag*—Amazing Stories. *It contains the best science-fiction on the newsstands today.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

I was interested in Robert Silverberg's story "Guardian of the Crystal Gate" in August *Fantastic,* for a very different reason than my usual one of just liking s-f stories.

In the fall months of 1924 there was a serial story in *Argosy* in which the heroine's name was *Sharane.* She was an Egyptian I think.

I was very much taken with the name, so much so, that I named my daughter so at her birth in 1927. I have never since found the name in any place, history or fantasy, and if possible I would like to know where R. Silverberg found it?

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Incidentally, if anyone knows where I can get any old copies of *Argosy*—or *All Story* as it was then called—for those months, probably Nov., or Oct., 1925, I wish to hear from them. Unfortunately I cannot remember the title of the story or the author's name. All I remember is the name *Sharane.*

Mrs. K. J. Replogle Simmons
"Shadon-Neiken"
River Hills Drive
Tampa, Fla.

• *Your daughter Sharane certainly won't meet herself coming down the street—not with an exceptional name like that. We'll ask Bob Silverberg where he got it the next time we see him.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

Just finished reading the August issue of *Fantastic.* I thought it was pretty good but I wish you could get a sequel to "Guardian of the Crystal Gate."

I have one question about the cover story; on the cover both girls fighting have long hair but in the story the girl is described as having short hair. A little syncretism seems in order.

I especially liked the idea behind "Growing Pains" and "The Slow and the Dead." The other stories were also good. I really enjoyed the cartoons and I think that you ought to have more of them in each issue.

Bob Wilbarg
68 Upland Dr.
East Northport,
L. I., N. Y.

• *There haven't been enough cartoons in* Fantastic. *We're going to remedy that situation.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

Here are some of my opinions on the August issue of *Fantastic*:

Cover—good; would have enjoyed a blow-up of those gals on the diamond.

"Guardian of the Crystal Gate"—Silverberg should keep

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his detective and science fiction story types separate—it spoiled this story for me mixing the elements so much. "Oh how we need a shot in the plot today!" Shades of Spillane!

"Growing Pains" was the best story in the issue as far as I was concerned. The ending could have been better. "According to You . . ." and the cartoons were the other sections of the magazine that appealed to me most of all.

R. T. Hepner
P.O. Box 404
Culver City, Calif.

● *A concise, penetrating criticism of the issue; but we doubt if Bob Silverberg will agree with you on the "Guardian—" bit. We were a little dubious at first, but we thought Bob blended the two ideas very skillfully.*—ED.

Dear Mr. Fairman:

I am interested in finding the address of any science-fiction groups here in Seattle. I came to Seattle two years ago from San Francisco, and I have not yet met another fan.

I didn't think of this until I read a similar plea in the August issue of *Fantastic*. Now I hope that I will hear from other enthusiasts and get to meet some in this area.

Mrs. Mary Tackett
803 Seventh Ave.
Seattle 4, Washington

● *There's probably a fan's club or group somewhere in that area. No doubt a member will get in touch with you after reading this.*—ED.

Dear Editor:

I have a top-notch (but read twice) copy of Vol. 1, No. 1 *Fantastic* which I will sell to the highest bidder, minimum bid $1.75.

Robert Ebert
410 E. Washington St.
Urbana, Illinois

● *Let us know what this collector's gem finally goes for, Robert.*—ED.

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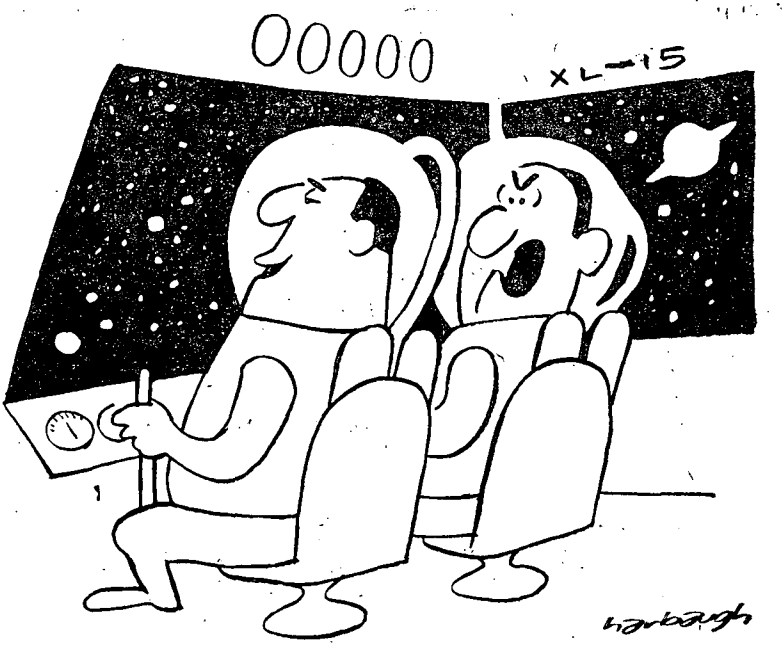
Dear Editor:

Dream World sounds good; with my luck I'll probably miss the first issue. Seems to me you ought to use some fantasy in it though, as this "new idea" stuff may run a little thin.

John Butterworth
37 Richmond Rd.
Belmont, Mass.

● *We think you're wrong about the "running thin" angle and we'll stand on the verdict you readers render. The first issue hits the stands December 11th—unless you subscribe. Then it comes a little sooner. Subscription rates—same as* Fantastic.



"Now don't start that twinkle, twinkle little star stuff again!"

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MAN OF MANY BODIES

By RALPH BURKE

What a wonderful world it would be if we could point to a fine new set of flesh and bones and say: "I'll take that one. Can you deliver it tomorrow?"

SINCE Harry Glenn was only about five-feet-seven or so, and not very hefty, it didn't seem fair to him that he should have to move over. The burly drunk in the black turtle-neck sweater wasn't being ethical about the whole thing. Harry told him so.

"You're not being ethical about the whole thing," Harry said.

The drunk turned slowly to face him. "Look, buddy, I told you to shove over and give me more room at the bar. Either you do it or I'm going to pitch you out the door. Got me?"

"I refuse to let you push me around," Harry said firmly. There was an ethical matter at stake here; he was a small man, and, if anything, it was the other fellow who was taking up too much room.

"Listen, pipsqueak, I mean what I say." In one smooth motion the big man scooped Harry up, propelled him through the door and out into the street, where, with a majestic flip, he sent him spinning down into the gutter. "Pick on someone your own size next time," the drunk shouted derisively, and then he went back inside.

Harry remained sprawled out on the street, dangling half over the curb, more humiliated than injured. A couple of people went past as he lay there; he heard their sympathetic clucking, but there was, of course, no attempt to help him to his feet. Not in New York.

Harry drummed his fin-

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The question was—which world were they in?

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gers against the tarnished metal rim that ran along the curb. He figured it was wiser just to lie there, letting his anger slowly melt away into a sort of cosmic disgust at the situation whereby such a bold, proud spirit as his should be allowed to be put into a body so inconsequential, so completely inadequate to contain it, than to go back inside the bar and get clobbered twice as hard.

Finally the rage subsided, and he began to grow more philosophical about the whole thing. There would always be big guys to push the little ones around, and good-looking guys to snap up the girls the homely fellows never got, and there wasn't much that could be done about it.

"That's what *you* think," said a small, child-like voice which seemed to emanate from a point about three inches from Harry's left ear.

Harry rolled an eyeball quizzically to the left and saw a tiny figure, no more than an inch or two high, sitting in the gutter astride a curved piece of metal that appeared to be one of a pair of handcuffs. Harry shut his eyes. When he opened them, the figure was still there.

"I'm not drunk," Harry told himself firmly. "I wasn't in there long enough to get drunk. *I am not drunk!*"

"Of course you aren't," the tiny being agreed. Its voice was impossibly high. "But you're tired of being pushed around. And that's why I'm here."

Harry started to lift himself to his feet, convinced he must have hit his head in the fall, but as he began to stir the little man said, "No, don't get up. It's easier to talk when you're down here on my level."

"Fair enough," Harry said. "I'll stay here. It may be safer, anyway, in my condition. Aren't you supposed to be pink, with a long trunk and a tail?"

"Not at all," the other said. "Don't be facetious. My name is Quork, and you can believe in me or not. I'm a demon by trade."

At that, Harry emitted one snort that nearly blew the little man away.

"Hey! Cut that out!"

"Sorry," Harry said. "But you—a demon?"

"I'm a small one," the demon said, a little crestfallen. "But it's not your place to poke fun at me—you *runt*."

"That's very true indeed," Harry said, reflectively. "I

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apologize. One small person shouldn't laugh at another, I guess. What's your specialty?"

"You," the demon said. "I'm in charge of small, pushed - around individuals like you—or like myself, for that matter. My employers have decided it's time to give you a break." He indicated the single handcuff lying in the gutter. "Here. This is for you. Put it on."

He climbed down from the handcuff, and Harry reached out and took it. "What does it do?" he asked.

"It provides complete personality projection," the demon said, rolling the big words glibly off his forked tongue. "When you're wearing it, you can take any human shape you want—within limits, of course."

Harry put the handcuff around his wrist and snapped it shut. It clicked resoundingly.

"There," Harry said. "If I'm going to have hallucinations, by God, I'm going to play right along with them. What do I do now?"

"Just—*use* it," said Quork.

"Wait a minute!" Harry said, but the small demon had vanished, leaving him alone in the dark, moonless city street. Harry shook his head thoughtfully. He must have suffered a concussion when that drunk hurled him down. Demons, yet! He started once again to clamber to his feet, and was startled to find sudden help in the form of a strong hand inserted roughly under his arm.

"Lemme give you a hand," growled a heavy voice. Harry got to his feet, rocking unsteadily a little, and looked at his Samaritan.

"Hello, officer," he said mildly. "Nice evening, isn't it? Ah—I was just taking a walk when . . ."

"Swell one for staying sober," the policeman said. "Suppose you come along with me, friend. The mayor's latest keep-the-streets-clean order includes you."

"Now just one minute," Harry protested. He was indignant. "I'm just as sober as you are. I was in a brawl just now, through no fault of my own, and I was just getting up from where some bully threw me. You can't take me to jail for that!"

"Look here, pal, you can tell—"

"I know," said Harry. "But I don't *want* to talk to the judge! I want to go home, and clean off this mud, and work on my new poem. I

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won't spend a night in jail, officer! I'm as sober as you are!" he repeated.

"That's a laugh," the policeman said, and immediately broke into uproarious laughter which echoed up and down the quiet streets. "Me, a drinking man! Why, I haven't touched the stuff in twenty-eight years, ever since I joined the Force, and I'll swear by my sainted grandmother that—"

But Harry had an idea. He glanced at the gleaming handcuff that still encumbered his wrist, and said, "All right, Sergeant. I'll test your sobriety, and if *you're* sober I'll let you take me away. Suppose you tell me what I look like."

"Test my sobriety? You worthless rummy, playing games with me? Okay, I'll play." He stepped back and looked at Harry. "Faith, man, you're a puny little chap in a tweed coat, with not much hair on your head and not a muscle in your body! Does that tell you how sober I am? Come along, now!"

Harry rubbed the handcuff gently with his left thumb, hoping that was the right thing to do. He visualized a stevedore, six-feet-four or so, with arms like rhinoceros legs and an ugly red scar running diagonally across his face. *Complete personality projection,* he thought.

It had instant effect. The policeman's eyes widened in horror; he jumped back and exclaimed, "Now where'd *you* come from just now? And what happened to the little guy? "What kind of funny business is this?"

"I'm right here, officer," said Harry, reverting to his natural form. The officer blinked, stared around the street, and reverently took off his cap, revealing a totally bald head.

"Now where'd that big ape go?" he asked, puzzled.

"I've been here all the time, Mack," Harry said, turning into the stevedore once again and lowering his voice by at least an octave.

That was all the policeman was going to take. He slapped his cap back on, muttering, "Twenty-eight years, never touched a drop," and turning, he dashed away.

Harry watched him go tearing down the street and around the corner, and listened to the clatter of his heels in the distance, until finally all was silent again. Then it was his turn to react. He sat down limply on the edge of the sidewalk.

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Dream? Who knew? Hallucination? Probably.

Complete personality projection. The stevedore was one of the many men who lurked within the negligible body of Harry Glenn, bottled up inside him. Now, he could be freed.

Harry smiled. He had a few old scores to settle, while this strange power lasted.

He turned and entered the bar, pushing the door aside with unfamiliar gusto, and walking to the counter with a totally new vigor in his stride.

The drunk who had pitched him out half an hour before was still sitting there, hunched up on his stool, cradling a double Scotch in his giant paw. Harry took a deep breath and walked over to where he sat. He tapped the other on the shoulder.

"Pardon me," he said, purposely making his voice even meeker than usual, "would you mind moving over just a bit?"

"You back again?" the drunk roared without looking up. "This time I'm gonna pulverize you!" He put down his drink and whirled sharply. The ugly visage of the stevedore-projection greeted him.

"I'll—*ulp!* Where'd you come from?" There was new respect in the drunk's voice. "I mean—I thought you were someone else."

"I am," Harry said mysteriously. "Step outside a minute, Mack."

"Hey! Hold on! I didn't do nothin' to you!"

"Don't matter," Harry barked. "Let's get outside." To make things even better, he reached out and casually flicked the other man's drink to the floor.

The reaction was immediate. The drunk uncoiled from his chair, primed to fight anyone or anybody. Harry dragged him outside.

They squared off, while a little crowd of bystanders from the bar came out to see what was going on. For one terrified moment Harry wondered whether his personality projection was only an illusion or really a real thing, and then the drunk threw a wild swing at him and there was no time for conjecture.

Feeling a thrill of battle he had never known before, Harry pushed aside the blow easily and stepped inside the other's guard. His projected body moved marvelously; two quick punches and it was over. A right, a crossing left, and the drunk went sprawl-

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ing down into the gutter, landing about where Harry had been not long before.

"Next time move over," Harry said. He rubbed his knuckles and went back inside the bar.

"A double Scotch," he said loudly.

He got home just as the sun was coming up. He was more than a little overhung, but it had been worth it, just to see the expression on the drunk's face as he had gone crashing into the gutter. So that was what it was like to be able to bully people? It was a good feeling, Harry thought, though he knew there wouldn't be much pleasure to be gained by it any more. Once was enough; one bully paid back, and he was satisfied. He was not, after all, a vindictive man.

A shave and a shower refreshed him; he rummaged around in his refrigerator and managed to put together a meager breakfast, and then, closing the doors that sealed his miniature kitchen off from his living-room-cum-bedroom-cum-office, he sat down in his one big armchair to plan the day's procedure.

Assets: one new, apparently unlimited power.

Liabilities: the disadvantage of not knowing how long the power would last, where it had come from (it couldn't *really* have been given to him by a two-inch-high demon!), or how reliably it would function.

He decided to make the greatest use of his new ability, for the greatest good of Harry Glenn, as quickly as possible. He drew up a list of situations in which being able to take another form could be of some use to him.

Inside of fifteen minutes, he had a hundred different items on his list, most of which he immediately rejected as being completely unethical. He was determined to make use of the power only in an ethical fashion.

Still, there were plenty of things left that could be juggled into his code of ethics, with a little shoehorning by way of an assist. For instance, there was that literary magazine—

Two months before, he had timidly taken a sheaf of his best poems down to the editorial offices of *Ipso Facto*, one of the most respected of the little literary quarterlies. In a sequence of events that proved entirely humiliating, he was first refused admittance, then finally admitted

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and sent to the advertising director, who listened to about three words of his stammered explanation and shunted him down the hall to the personnel manager, where he was told, bluntly but politely, "Sorry, we're not hiring any office boys this week," and he was bustled out of the office before he had a chance to show any of his poems to anyone.

That, he decided, was all going to be fixed. He leafed through his portfolio, winnowed out about five of his best pieces, and slid them into a manila envelope.

On his way downtown, he toyed nervously with the poems, reading them over and over again, trying to convince himself that someone might find them worth publishing. He had never been anxious to submit anything, always unsure of himself. But now—now was his moment!

At last the subway arrived at Sheridan Square, and he got out and followed a twisting street to the address of the offices of *Ipso Facto*. As he got into the elevator of the imposing building, he furtively rubbed the handcuff and felt a change come over him.

He stepped out on the sixth floor and majestically threw open the door, throwing back his mane of red hair as he entered. He strode over to the receptionist and asserted himself.

"I'd like to see the Poetry Editor," he said firmly. "My name is Glenn." He waited expectantly.

The girl at the desk looked up. Her eyes widened. "Why, of course, yes, Mr. Glenn," she said. "How wonderful to have you come to see him! His office is right down there!"

"Thank you," Harry said, and followed the direction her forefinger indicated. He heard the excited whispers as he moved in stately fashion down the hall.

He knocked on the Poetry Editor's door.

"Come in," said the editor's voice, and Harry entered. What the editor saw was a young man, six-feet-three in height, with a classic profile, tapering, sensitive fingertips, and flaming red hair sweeping back in an impressive pompadour: Harry Glenn's idealized picture of the Harry Glenn he should have been.

"Hello," the editor said, looking up from a desk buried with manuscripts. He was a thin, tweedy-looking

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man with hornrims and an owlish appearance.

"Mr. Crawford?"

Crawford nodded. "My name is Harry Glenn," Harry said. His voice was a throbbing, commanding baritone. "You may have read some of my work elsewhere."

It wasn't true, of course; Harry was yet to see print for the first time. Crawford frowned, obviously trying to recall where he *had* seen some of Harry's poetry, and then, deciding it was best to agree, smiled and said, "Yes, of course. Some very impressive work, as I recall."

"Thank you," Harry said casually. He flipped the envelope down on the editor's desk. "I've brought you some of my new work to consider. Tossed them all off last night, but I thought your mag might like them."

Harry stared compellingly at Crawford for a moment.

"Well, thank you very much, Mr.—Mr. Glenn," the editor said. He gestured at the heap of manuscripts. "I'll give your work a preferential reading, you may be sure. You'll hear from me in a week to ten days."

Harry—the real Harry, down inside the red-haired personality projection—fought down a wild desire to bow down in gratitude and crawl out of the office backward, and said instead, "Well, that's too bad. I've got to make a stop to see some of my friends over at *Quondam Quarterly,* and I might just as well take these as long as you can't manage to look at them sooner."

He reached for the envelope, but Crawford was quicker. He snatched up the poems. "Maybe you'd better let me look at them first, Mr. Glenn. Our rates are *so* much higher than *Quondam*'s, you know, and I needn't mention the prestige—"

"Well, all right," Harry said, pretending reluctance as well as he could. "Glance through them, then."

"Certainly, sir." Crawford seemed utterly cowed by the flaming-haired, towering poet. The editor took Harry's poems from their envelope, licked his lips contemplatively, and settled down to read.

Ten minutes later, Crawford was typing out a voucher for the purchase of five poems, to be run in a special portfolio in the forthcoming issue of *Ipso Facto.*

"Very fine work indeed," the editor said.

It's all in the approach, Harry told himself, as he

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shook hands with Crawford, boomed his farewell, and headed briskly out of the office. Editors, he thought, have to be frightened into buying things by newcomers; a perfectly good poem from meek little Harry Glenn would never even get read, but this new Harry Glenn—

He patted the handcuff affectionately as he made his way through the crowded office to the elevator. This was the start; from now on, he was going in just one direction—*up*.

He pressed the buzzer. As he did so, he was startled by a deep, throaty feminine voice coming from directly behind him.

"Well," she asked. "Did you sell?"

Harry turned to confront one of the most delicious-looking girls he had ever seen. She was tall—about five-eight or so, Harry estimated — with golden-blonde hair pulled back tight from her forehead and tied into a two-foot-long ponytail in the back. She was wearing a tight, wrist-length sweater and an even tighter skirt, and the eye-stopping figure thus revealed was worth three or four second glances, and then some.

"Sell?" Harry asked, too preoccupied with her shape to be able to focus his attention on what she had asked. "Oh —yes, of course. They took five poems of mine; they're running them as a portfolio next issue."

"How grand!" she said, flashing brilliant white teeth. "I've just placed my novel with them, you know. They're splitting it into three novellas, but I really don't mind. Come," she said, as the elevator arrived. "I think we both ought to celebrate our respective successes!"

Harry started to say something, but his personality projection carried him along on her impetus, and he merely smiled gaily and said, "Wonderful! How about lunch at the *Flying Dutchman?*"

"Of course," she said, radiating warmth and desirability. "What better place for two newly-successful literary artists! And then we can have cocktails at my place, of course."

"Of course," Harry agreed. Behind his back, he squeezed the handcuff joyously, and muttered a silent blessing for Quork, that minuscule demon.

Her name was Brenda, she was a writer and an artist,

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and she lived in a cold-water flat on MacDougal Street. She had been working on her novel for a year; it embodied her whole life's experience in a new artistic synthesis, and to hear her talk it was quite a story.

As the afternoon wore on, and cocktail succeeded cocktail until the martinis became dry to the point of dessication, Harry found himself falling wildly for this radiant goddess of a girl. This, he thought, was the sort of girl he deserved to have, and the sort of girl he would never have dared approach in his old body.

They discussed everything from Bach to Bartok, Titian to Tanguy, Jonson to James Joyce. They were a perfect pair; every interest, every taste seemed to match. By five in the afternoon, it was all settled: they would leave the next day for Taos, New Mexico, and live on a quiet hill, raising goats and pouring forth a stream of novels and poems that would astound the literary world.

"There's just one catch," Brenda said, pouring Harry a martini straight from the gin bottle (there was no more Vermouth.) "I don't have a cent, and *Ipso Facto* won't pay us for three months. Unless you're loaded, I don't know how we're going to get out there."

"Hmm," Harry grunted. "Is a problem." He downed his martini. "But don't worry about it. I'll have the cash by tomorrow, and we'll take the first plane out there," he said grandiloquently.

"Done!" she cried. "Suppose you beat it uptown now, and start packing. I'll do the same."

"A little later," he said. "We're not in *that* much of a hurry." He took her hungrily in his arms, and pulled her close to him.

When the euphoria wore off, about five hours later, Harry found himself back in his own uptown room, alone, still glowing a little around the edges.

Brenda. It was almost unbelievable. But there were problems.

First, he had no money, and no prospect of getting any.

Second—and this was the big one—what happened if the power left him, suddenly? What if Brenda were to awaken some morning, in their New Mexico paradise, and find by her side, instead of the god-like man she knew, a small, utterly unim-

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pressive little fellow not quite her own height? Harry shuddered at the thought.

He looked at the handcuff. It was the key to everything. It meant, almost literally, life or death for Harry Glenn.

He thought of Quork, the small demon. Could Quork have been so sadistic as to give him a power that would fail him just when he needed it most? It didn't seem likely; at least, he didn't want it to seem likely.

"I'll risk it," he said out loud. The handcuff seemed to be glowing on his hand, and he felt a new surge of confidence. He'd remain six-feet-three forever, of that he was sure. The power would never fail him. It would mean maintaining an uneasy pretense for the rest of his life—but it was worth it, for Brenda.

That left the problem of money. That was easy; all of his old ethics were swept past him, in the face of his new life with Brenda.

He'd rob a bank. He had a foolproof disguise.

At nine the next morning, he entered the largest and busiest bank in the neighborhood, feeling calm and self-possessed, and wearing the outward image of a bald, middle-aged man. He spent some fifteen minutes wandering around the bank floor, examining things, studying the way the bank was situated. Then he drew a convincing-looking toy gun from his pocket, summoned all his powers of concentration, and stepped to one of the teller's cages.

Ten minutes later, he calmly walked away, unnoticed, with three thousand dollars in small bills in a thick envelope in his pocket, and, as the alarm sounded, broke into a dash and started to run. He got outside, turned into a freckle-faced teenager, and vanished into the crowd before anyone saw him.

On his way down to Brenda's in the subway later, sitting in an empty local surrounded by the two suitcases that held all the personal possessions he intended to keep, he chuckled to himself over the account of the robbery in the afternoon paper.

"The holdup was one of the most daring ever committed," the story said. "And not the simplest part of the whole operation is the conflicting set of reports turned in by the witnesses. The teller who handed over the money swears that the bandit was five-feet-eight and bald, while a man standing nearby

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reports that he was about six-feet-two, with a crewcut."

That had been the hardest part, Harry thought—projecting different things to different people. But it had worked; it had worked magnificently. He'd fooled them all, left them totally confused.

"Other descriptions of the bandit were similarly at variance with each other," the account went on. "He was dressed either in a plain brown suit with brown necktie, or in sports clothes without a tie; his weight was either 160 or 210 pounds.

"Police Commissioner Reilly, commenting on the bizarre aspects of the case, says his men are working on the solution of the robbery now, and at present the teller has been held for further questioning."

Harry nodded. It was too bad the teller had to get involved in the thing, and too bad to take innocent folks' money. But, Lord knew, he'd been scrupulously honest all his life, and now that his one big chance had come it wasn't *too* serious to commit one little bank robbery, was it? After all, he needed the money so badly.

He finally reached his destination and got off. He walked buoyantly through the winding little streets of the Village till he found Brenda's building, and then almost floated up the dingy stairs, singing a jaunty aria from *Don Giovanni* as he climbed.

He reached the top at last, dumped his suitcases on the landing, and played a tattoo on the door with his fists. "I'm here, Brenda!" he bellowed. "All packed?" Ready and waiting, he hoped.

The door opened. But it wasn't Brenda who answered. It was a man in a policeman's uniform, and his face was grim.

"Hello, Mr. Glenn," he said. "I thought I'd find you here. We've been searching all over for you."

Harry stepped back. "What sort of joke is this? Where's Brenda?"

"She's not here just now," the officer said. "Do you have the cash with you?"

"What cash?" Harry countered.

"The cash from the bank you robbed," the policeman said, pulling Harry inside and shutting the door. Harry saw that the officer was somewhat taller even than his assumed six-three, and fully armed.

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"I don't know what you're talking about," Harry said.

The policeman smiled. "Please don't make this difficult, Mr. Glenn. I know perfectly well that you're the man who robbed the National this morning, and I'm here to bring you in. Will you come quietly, or do I have to take you?"

Harry's stomach dropped about a foot. Wild schemes flashed through his head, of changing into a worm or an ameba and vanishing, but he rejected the idea. The jig was up. It was all over. He saw he should have maintained his code of ethics after all, and stayed away from any sort of nefarious activities. He held out his hands, revealing the handcuff on one wrist. No use resisting.

"Here," he said. "I give myself up. I confess. Take me away."

The policeman stared at his hands with a strange smile on his lips. "You've already got one handcuff on. How come?"

"I'm too tired to explain," Harry said wearily. He was almost glad, now that the whole thing was over; he had never deserved a girl as glorious as Brenda in the first place, and he saw now that a lifetime of hiding behind a mask would have been worse than a prison sentence.

"Would this help you to make an explanation?" the policeman said. He stretched out his own wrists. Harry stared.

On one wrist was the mate to the handcuff he was wearing. As Harry blinked in amazement, the form of the policeman wavered and melted, and in its place stood—

Brenda.

She was in his arms in a moment. He held her tight, dizzy with relief and bewilderment, and then pushed her away. Suddenly some of the answers entered his mind, and he gasped.

"You, too!" He pointed at the handcuff. "You have the power too!" He flung himself down on the spidery black butterfly chair, weak with amazement. She came over to him.

"Yes, you silly," she said affectionately. "I was just playing a game of cops and robbers with you. As soon as I saw the account of the bank robbery, I put everything together and I knew you *had* to have the power the same way I do! It was the only explanation for the way those witnesses differed."

"What a gigantic coinci-

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dence," Harry said, barely managing to croak in a whisper. "That we should be at the same place at the same time—"

"No coincidence at all," said a piping voice from the floor. "I engineered it." Harry looked down, not at all surprised to see Quork, the miniature demon, there.

"So you weren't a hallucination after all," Harry said.

"I'm a lot more real than you are," Quork said pointedly. Harry reddened, guessing his meaning.

"You—you arranged the whole thing," Harry said.

"That's right," said the demon, hopping up to the edge of the chair. "My employers felt it was too bad you two perfectly good people had to be lonely and apart, too shy ever to approach one another, and so we took this rather roundabout way of bringing you together."

Harry looked at Brenda. She was still standing in the middle of the floor, looking as radiant as ever. She smiled at him.

"Suppose you two hold out your hands," Quork said. "I'm going to need those handcuffs for the next job."

Almost automatically, without thinking, Harry and Brenda held out their arms, and the handcuffs dropped off; Quork caught one neatly in each hand, lowered them, and sat on them.

Harry suddenly felt the change come over him, and he shut his eyes in terror. He knew he was back in his old body; the god-like personality projection must have vanished when the handcuff came off, and for the first time Brenda was seeing the real Harry Glenn.

Slowly, timidly, he opened his eyes. Brenda was still standing in the middle of the floor—but she, too, had changed. She was a small, thin girl with curly brown hair—a little pale, a little mousy-looking, but with an undeniable kind of unbeautiful loveliness about her.

"Go on," Quork urged. "Get up there and kiss her."

Harry got out of his chair and walked over to her. She was four or five inches shorter than he was, and she was looking up at him with a sort of wonder in her eyes.

"No more masks," Harry said slowly. "They're all gone now."

"I know," said Brenda. "But we don't need them any more, do we?"

"I guess not," said Harry.

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"Our real selves will have to serve the purpose." He fumbled in his pocket. The money was still there, a bulky package in its bank envelope. He drew it out.

"That's a lot of money," he said.

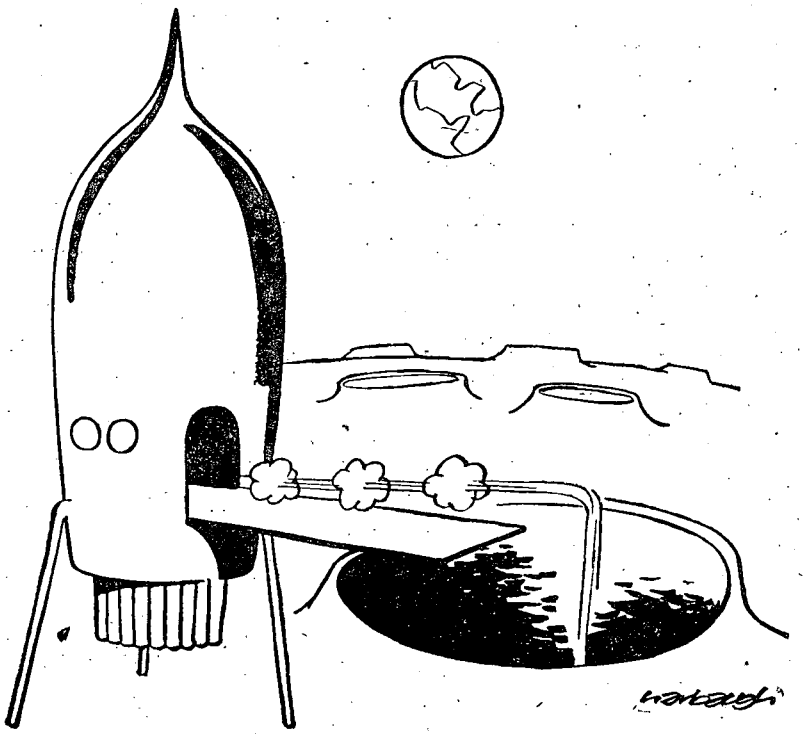
"Too much," said Brenda. "It'll spoil us."

"Right," Harry agreed. "I'll mail it all back tonight."

Brenda smiled—and her smile, Harry noticed, was a warm and wonderful thing, with none of the flashiness of the *other* Brenda. "We can forget all about New Mexico," she said. "I think we can be happy right here—the *real* us."

"I'm sure of it," Harry said, as he pulled her toward him. "Let's start collaborating now."

THE END



"I'm the first man to set foot on the moooooo!"

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 (Continued from page 22)

heard on the stairway leading up to the bridge.

Captain Boggs swung around briskly and glared at the intruder. "No passengers allowed on the bridge!" he shouted. Then, in a quieter tone, "Oh, it's you, Dr. Armitage. What is it?"

Dr. Armitage took a deep gasp. "The jewels! They've been stolen! Come! Call the police!"

The Captain tried to tell the flustered Dr. Armitage that there were no police aboard, but he was drowned out by cries of: "Call the Army! Call the Marines!"

Captain Boggs drew a deep breath. "QUIET!" he bellowed, with a lung power that seemed to shake the ship. He took another deep breath, and this time his voice softened to a low roar. "I'll call out the British Merchant Marine, Dr. Armitage. Will that be quite enough?"

The Egyptologist nodded his head. "Certainly, Captain. But we must hurry quickly! The Belt of Osiris has been stolen! Someone has broken into the strong room!"

Captain Boggs opened his mouth, then snapped it shut. Then he reached for the ship's phone. "First Officer Pinkin! Report to the strong room! I'll be there in half a minute, and by Gad, sir, you'd best be there before me!"

He turned to Dr. Armitage. "Come along, Doctor!" He started down the ladder toward the hold.

First Officer Pinkin was still buttoning his jacket as he rushed up to the strong room. He came to a full halt just as he finished the last button.

The Captain and Dr. Armitage were waiting for him.

"Mr. Pinkin was formerly with Scotland Yard," the Captain said brusquely. "Let's go in." He tried the door. It swung smoothly open. "By Gad! It *is* open!"

The three men stepped inside and walked around the mounds of packing cases to the place where the sarcophagus lay.

"Here's the jewel-casket," Armitage said. Pinkin and the Captain gathered around as Armitage lifted the lid.

"Shouldn't it be locked?" Captain Boggs asked.

"It should be," said Armitage. "I unlocked it to show the jewels to my daughter, and—" He paused, and looked around. "Hmm, that's funny. I'm *sure* I left my daughter down here someplace."

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"There's no one down here but us," Captain Boggs pointed out impatiently. "About these jewels—"

"Linda!" Armitage called, ignoring the Captain. "Linda, are you down here?" There was no answer. The Egyptologist shrugged. "I guess she must have left. Well, now, the jewels."

He drew out a handful of the casket's treasures and let the two officers gaze at them. "You see, gentlemen, the most important thing of all is not here—the Belt of Osiris! It's of untold value, and it's—it's not here! It was missing when my daughter and I opened the casket, just a little while ago." He frowned and stroked his chin. "She could tell you more about it. Only—where *is* she?"

The Captain frowned. "Yes, a good question. What if your daughter made off with your precious belt? It must be a pretty bauble for a girl, you know!"

"Captain! I couldn't believe —that is—no. I had the only key."

"*Someone* took the belt," Pinkin reminded.

Captain Boggs coughed noisily and folded his arms. "Dr. Armitage, I wish to point out one important fact to you. The chest and the sarcophagus were registered aboard this ship—but not their contents, Dr. Armitage."

"*What?*" Armitage's eyes widened in outrage. "But the casket contained jewels of incalculable value—and then there's the mummy! The mummy, gentlemen!"

Boggs smirked. "Look here, Doctor. Those jewels may be worth a king's ransom—but I still don't know a thing about them, officially. Why, for all I know there's no mummy in that coffin and there never *was* a Belt of Osiris in that casket!"

Armitage scowled. "You're being most unfair, Captain Boggs." He produced the key to the sarcophagus with an impressive flourish. "Before we go any further, let me demonstrate."

He strode to the sarcophagus and inserted the key. After a few moments of exploratory turning and twisting, he tried to lift the lid.

"Odd," he said, half to himself. "It doesn't lift. I must have locked it instead of unlocking it. Just a moment more, gentlemen."

He diddled with the key a second time, and now there was a sudden click and the lid loosened.

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"Give me a hand with this, will you?" Armitage ordered in tones of surprising bluntness. "It's rather heavy."

Pinkin and the Captain fell to, in spite of themselves and grasped the rim of the sarcophagus.

"*Heave!*" Armitage ordered.

They heaved. The lid swung back.

"Very interesting, Dr. Armitage," Captain Boggs said slowly. "*Very* interesting."

"Yes, very," echoed Pinkin.

With unbelieving eyes Armitage peered over the rim.

The sarcophagus was as empty as a church on Monday. The precious belt and mummy completely vanished.

Larry Levine was lying in bed the next morning, reflectively smoking a fine Turkish cigarette—he despised Egyptian tobacco—when the door flew open.

Instinctively his hand started to slide toward the .38 under the pillow, but he stopped when he saw it was only Pussyfoot O'Shaughnessy.

"You better knock the next time," Levine said. "Unless you want your head removed by accident."

"Sorry, boss."

Levine glared.

"Oh—sorry, *Larry*," O'Shaughnessy corrected.

"That's better. Now, what's the hurry about?"

"Crazy story, Larry. Thought I'd better tell you the pitch—and don't laugh, huh?"

"I'm not laughing," Levine said. "What goes?"

"The mummy," said O'Shaughnessy. "The mummy goes. All around the ship. It ain't in the coffin any more. It was creepin' around all last night, Larry!"

Levine smiled coldly. "I told you to stay off that stuff, Pussyfoot. Why don't you stick to dames instead? *That's* habit-forming too, and it doesn't make you half as hop-headed. Honest, Pussyfoot."

"I told you not to laugh at me, Larry. This thing is big." O'Shaughnessy wiped perspiration from his brow with a ham-like hand. "Seems some dame saw the mummy all wrapped in gauze, and some other guy, and—"

The door opened a second time, and Manetti entered.

"Guess what, Larry?"

"You just saw a mummy walking?"

"No, but—hey, how did you know?"

Levine sat up in bed. "Now look, you two. Are you going to sit here and tell me that

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that mummy came to life and is strolling around the deck?"

Manetti nodded gravely. "That's what they're saying, Larry. It happened late last night."

"Any official comment?"

"Nobody's seen any of the brass all morning," Manetti said. "The thing *must* have gotten loose."

Levine climbed out of the bed and got into his lounging robe, scratching his chin reflectively. "Yeah," he said after a pause. "Something fishy must be happening, if the brass isn't around."

He turned to face the other two. "Have you been downstairs?"

"We couldn't get there, Larry. There's a guard in the corridor."

"Oh?" Levine lifted an eyebrow. "Something funny, I'll bet. And those jewels are sitting down there—or are *they* walking around too?"

"No word about them," O'Shaughnessy said. "Want me to try to get another peek?"

"No," Levine said. "No percentage in that." He nibbled at his lip for a moment. "I think I got a better idea. One that shows a little thinkin' at least."

"What's on the fire, boss?"

"You'll find out. Get me that first-aid kit, Pussyfoot."

"Huh? You feeling all right, boss—Larry?"

"Get me the first-aid kit," Levine repeated. "And then get out of here and see how much extra gauze you can scrape up."

O'Shaughnessy nodded bewilderedly. Levine turned to Manetti, and smiled. "Little Joe, I have plans for you. Will you kindly remove your clothing? This is going to take a lot of time."

Dr. Avery Armitage awoke the next morning with an unusual glow running through his veins. There was excitement afoot! Heigh-ho!

He leaped out of bed, took a quick cold shower, dressed in his best, and strolled down the companionway that led toward the main deck ladder.

He was whistling joyfully as he walked by his daughter's cabin. The door opened.

"Oh, pardon me, sir," said Linda. "I thought—" Then her eyes opened w i d e l y. "Daddy! It *is* you!"

Dr. Armitage stopped and smiled widely. "Why, of course it's me! Who the hell did you expect? The Archbishop of Canterbury? Pip-ho, my dear! Have a good breakfast!"

He did not notice his

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daughter's astonished gaze, which followed him down the companionway.

He stuck his hands in his pockets and sang softly to himself as he neared the ladder.

"It seems there was a man
in love,
A man who was a
member of
The Royal High Dragoons.
In searching for his lady's
locket,
He put his hand within
his pocket,
And there he found some
pr—"

He came to stop halfway up the stair and looked at what he had found in his own pocket. Then he grinned.

"Well, well! The amethyst scarab from the Belt of Osiris!" He put it back where he had found it. "The hell with it!" he chortled.

Lady Blessingame blinked in amazement as the extraordinarily handsome man strode toward her. Without quite knowing what she did, she stepped toward him and said: "My *dear* sir! Are you dining at the Captain's table?"

The singularly handsome gentleman bowed. "I am, my lady. How fortunate that we have already met!"

Somewhat taken aback, her ladyship said: "But—we have? I—I mean—have we?"

"Certainly, my dear," said the gentleman, winking slyly, "I am Dr. Armitage."

She looked at him and blinked. There was a definite resemblance to the little, washed-out man she had met briefly the day before, but—

"My dear lady!" said Dr. Armitage, "Are you sure you want breakfast? Wouldn't there be something else that you would prefer?"

Lady Blessingame, dazzled, smiled. "Why—why, yes. A—a bit of champagne, perhaps? I have some in my cabin."

"An excellent idea," said the Egyptologist.

Lady Blessingame had married Lord Blessingame when she was only seventeen. His lordship had been thirty-seven. And now that she had reached thirty, Lady Blessingame did not look upon a man of fifty as being in the prime of life. As a matter of fact, his lordship had never reached that happy state—he had never been in the prime of life.

And Lady Blessingame had been looking for a younger man for some years now. She

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felt she had found him in Dr. Armitage.

As they entered the stateroom, Lady Armitage smiled feebly. "Actually, my dear Doctor, I have no champagne. Perhaps we had better—"

"Perhaps we had," smiled Dr. Armitage, stepping forward.

Within a few moments, her ladyship had no doubts about the Egyptologist. His hands seemed to do unusual things, and his kisses were like hot wine against her mouth.

As though she had been struck by high-voltage electricity, her body went into frenzied motion.

"Avery!" she gasped some time later. "You're wonderful! Ah, my dear, youth is wonderful!"

"Youth, hell!" said the doctor gleefully. "I'm sixty-seven!"

The cool ocean breezes drifted in saltily as Linda stared over the rail. She was puzzled.

The diamond belt had disappeared. The mummy had disappeared. Her father was acting as if he'd just found the fountain of youth, and no one aboard ship was saying anything about anything.

"You look puzzled, Linda."

"Oh—it's you, Leslie."

Bingham joined her at the rail. "Yes. Me. Leslie. Hello, Linda."

"Hello, Leslie," she said abstractedly, without turning.

"What's the trouble, Linda?"

"Nothing," she said. "Really, nothing."

He stepped a little closer to her. "I've been meaning to talk to you about that scatterbrained conversation the other day. All I meant was—"

"There's no need to explain, Leslie. I've always felt very fond of you—like a brother, you might say."

"That's exactly it," he said glumly. "Now, why can't we—"

"The breeze is very pleasant this morning," said a deep, warm voice suddenly. Bingham looked up in irritation at the bronzed, powerful man who had abruptly appeared at Linda's left.

"Yes, it is," Linda said.

"I don't believe we've met," Bingham said coldly.

"Muhammid ibn Abdul, of Alexandria."

"Leslie Bingham, of Arkham. And this is Miss Linda Armitage."

"We've met," Muhammid said.

"Oh? I didn't know that," Linda said, surprised.

Muhammid grinned, show-

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ing flashing white teeth. "We passed each other in the hallway, the first day. I was in a wheelchair, with my servant Ahnku attending me."

"I remember now."

"Yes. I was—suffering from an ailment. An allergy to fog—an ailment which I do not expect to be troubled with again. But I am happy to meet you under more pleasant circumstances, Miss Armitage. I've seen you from a distance several times, and—if you'll pardon my saying so—I have wished each time that the distance between us was less."

Linda reddened prettily, while Bingham scowled. He didn't care for the way this conversation was going, at all.

"We were just considering going for a swim," Bingham said. "Weren't we, Linda? Let's be on our way."

"Why, that's a wonderful idea! Would you care to join us, Mr. Abdul?"

"Call me Muhammid, please. Why, yes, I'd be happy to join you. I understand the ship's pool is one of the wonders of the world. We shall get into our bathing suits now?"

"Fine," Linda said. Muhammid made a courtly bow and strode away toward the companionway. Linda turned to Bingham.

"He's quite interesting, isn't he?"

"I didn't think so," Bingham said.

"You wouldn't. Well, why don't you go down to get your suit, Leslie?"

"I don't think I'll join you," Bingham said, in a strangled voice. "I wouldn't want to cut in on what looks like it's becoming a private party."

Bingham stood alone on the deck for a few moments, clenching and unclenching his fists in miserable frustration. Who was this Muhammid, anyway, that he could come along and turn Linda's head like that? He could see from the glow in her eyes that the girl was hooked.

Unless—

Unless he, Leslie Bingham, could do something to redeem himself, something to prove to Linda that he was more than just a mediocre Egyptologist. Hastily he dashed downstairs to his cabin.

A few minutes later he had wound himself completely in gauze. Stealthily, he made his way down through the dim recesses of the ship toward the strong room in the hold.

The sarcophagus was empty, its lid standing stiffly

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upright. Near it, the jewel-casket lay, similarly available. The jewels had long since been taken to the Captain's safe for custody, at Bingham's suggestion — Dr. Armitage seemed more concerned with capering around with Lady Blessingame than with recovering the jeweled belt, and so Bingham had taken charge, to a small extent. Someone had to find it.

Well, now it would be to a greater extent, he thought determinedly. Wrapping his gauze swathings around him more securely, he hoisted one leg, then another, over the rim of the sarcophagus and climbed in.

He stretched out full length and made himself as comfortable as possible. The jewel thief would be back for another haul before long—and this time Leslie Bingham would be on the spot to nab him.

Five minutes passed. Ten. Then Bingham heard noises.

"Hey, Phil—didn't someone go into the hold?"

"How do I know? Fine guard you are."

Bingham smiled. It was the pair of guards who had been posted on the strong room but who had wandered off somewhere while Bingham had slipped in.

"Let's go inside and check," the first voice said.

"Okay," said the other.

Footsteps approached. Bingham, in the sarcophagus, lay very still, breathing as shallowly as possible. He heard the two men getting closer.

"There is no one in here, Phil."

"Naw. It's okay. How's the mummy-box?"

"Still empty, as far as I know. Unless he got tired of walking around, and—*awk!*"

The guard's statement ended in a high-pitched shriek, and then there was the sound of two men fleeing rapidly over the deck floor and out of the hold. Puzzled, Bingham forced himself to lie still, wondering what would happen next.

Joe Manetti was perspiring inside the sheath of gauze Larry Levine had wound around him. *I feel like a damned cocoon,* he thought bitterly, as he tiptoed toward the hold.

He paused at the entrance. There were voices coming from inside. The guards, no doubt. He fought back the impulse to flee, then smiled and walked on. Levine's plan was a good one. Even if the guards *were* there, the mum-

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my outfit would send them packing. And then it would be a simple matter to walk in and scoop up the rest of those jewels.

Two men appeared to view as he stepped inside. And the expected happened. They goggled, screamed, and ran wildly past him up the stairs .

Manetti chuckled. It had worked beautifully—but he'd have to hurry now. Inside, scoop up the jewels, and beat it. He stepped in and looked around.

There was the sarcophagus, and near it the jewel-casket —both of them open. *This place gives me the creeps,* Manetti thought.

He crossed the deck to the jewel-casket in a couple of big bounds, and stuck his hands in.

Nothing.

The jewel-casket was empty.

Manetti cursed, vividly and explicitly. "Someone got here first, the crook!" he said loudly. "Who'd do a lousy thing like that?"

Angrily, he turned and started to leave. Then it was his turn to gasp. Standing in the doorway, advancing slowly toward him, moving with measured, even stride—was a figure in white gauze.

"Cripes, it's the real mummy!" Manetti mumbled. The gauze-clad figure started to move ominously toward the frightened crook. Without even thinking, Manetti grabbed the heavy jewel-casket and hurled it at the approaching figure. There was a sickening *crunch* as the casket collided with the mummy's skull.

"I guess I killed him," Manetti said. His legs started to quiver. It was one thing to plug a man in fair fight; it was another to crack a mummy's skull with a jewel-box. There was talk about curses, and such things. Manetti wasn't very happy.

Not quite knowing what to do next, he shifted his feet uncertainly, and found himself facing the sarcophagus—

From which another white-clad figure was in the process of rising.

"More mummies!" Manetti cried, in a shriek of despair. Screaming wildly, he bolted through the door and dashed madly back to the safety of his cabin.

Leslie Bingham climbed out of the sarcophagus and scratched his forehead. Something funny had evidently been going on, climaxed in a fight of some sort. There had definitely been the sound of a

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heavy object striking someone, and—

Yes. Over there, in the corner. Bingham saw a figure clad much like himself, in the white gauze wrappings of a mummy. Only this mummy was lying in a pool of blood, its skull crushed under the weight of the heavy jewel-casket.

Quickly Bingham knelt at the figure's side and ripped away the gauze. A dark, beady-eyed face glared back at him, the eyes fierce even in death. It was an unmistakably Egyptian face.

Poor Khama - Ptah - hor-Amen III, Bingham thought wildly. *That's what he gets for climbing out of his sarcophagus and wandering around. Now he's deader than he was before.*

Then Bingham had another thought. *I've got to tell everybody about this.*

He let the corpse's head drop to the deck and raced through the door, yelling loudly for the Captain, Dr. Armitage, Linda, and almost everybody else on board.

Linda Armitage was in love. She stood before the mirror in her cabin for a long

Everybody wanted to pound lumps on the mummy —or whoever else was handy.

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moment, stretching her nude body luxuriously, watching with a critical eye the swell of her breasts and the lean, flat curve of her belly.

I'm beautiful, she thought suddenly, without any feeling of conceit. It was a simple fact. And she loved Muhammid, and Muhammid would love her.

Slowly she climbed into her bathing-suit, felt the plastic tighten around her body, and stepped out into the corridor. She decided to go to Muhammid's stateroom, to meet him there and accompany him up for their swim.

The walk was a short one, and she stood outside his room, ready to knock. Then she heard voices from within.

"—Master, I tell you there's no harm in it. You've been operating under your own steam for days now; the belt is no longer effective, or at least it's not necessary."

"Dammit, Ahnku, I'm afraid," said Muhammid's rich voice. "I don't want to take the thing off, even for a swim. Can't you understand me?"

"Yes, yes, Master," said a voice she recognized as Ahnku's. "But your fears are groundless. The Belt of Osiris is no longer necessary!"

The Belt of Osiris! Linda caught her breath sharply. So Muhammid had it, and *he* was the thief.

Or was he? Linda hovered at the door, not knowing what she should do. Should she find her father and denounce Muhammid—

No.

She threw the door open instead. Muhammid was standing in the middle of the floor, wearing a pair of skin-tight swimming trunks. Above the waistline, against his bronzed body, gleamed the jeweled brightness of the Belt of Osiris.

"Linda! What are you doing here?"

Her lower lip quivered. "I heard you talking about the Belt," she said. "That Belt belongs to my father. I want to know what you're doing with it—and why."

Muhammid grinned broadly. "That Belt does *not* belong to your father. It belongs to me."

"What?"

He chuckled. "Come. Close the door so no extra ears can hear us, and I'll explain everything."

Gasping for breath, Leslie Bingham dashed up the spiral staircase and out onto the main recreation deck. There was the Captain, and several

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of the other guests, playing a relaxed game of shuffleboard as if nothing special at all had been happening aboard ship. As he ran frantically toward them, he noticed that there was no sign of Armitage and Lady Blessingame, or of Linda and Muhammid.

Someone screamed. Then another.

"Yikes!" shouted Sir Stephen Landrip. He reached for his sword cane, and then remembered what had happened to him the last time he had encountered the mummy, and precipitously galloped off down the deck without his stick shouting: "It's here! It's here! Run for your lives!"

"Wait!" Bingham yelled. But his voice was drowned out in the general confusion.

Then someone grabbed him by the shoulder. It was one of the Sikhs. "Mustapha! You fool! What happened? Have you bungled again? You were supposed to—"

At that point, two sailors, having decided that, supernatural or not, the mummy would have to be downed, leaped on Bingham's back.

"Fear not, Mustapha!" shouted Ali. "We shall save you! Haroun! Hassan!"

Two more phony Sikhs came up the ladder from below. They took one look and charged in to Bingham's assistance.

Meanwhile, some of the other sailors, having seen that the mummy was rather easily overpowered, took heart and leaped into the fray themselves. Sir Stephen came to a dead halt and then ran back, cursing himself inwardly for being a fool.

Hassan had whipped out a long, wicked-looking scimitar, and, charging in, was about to decapitate one of the sailors.

"Allah il'allah akbar!" he shouted.

But Sir Stephen was there before him, sword in hand. The weapons clashed, and the duel was on. Here, Sir Stephen was in his element as he brandished the sword.

The scimitar, having been parried, slashed sideways across Bingham. Bingham screeched as the keen edge sliced through gauze and trousers, narrowly missing Bingham himself.

Sir Richard pressed his advantage, and Hassan soon found himself backing away from the Englishman's onslaught. He could scarcely move his own blade fast enough to defend himself. Back and back he went, amid

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the vicious ring of steel on steel.

Suddenly, the Englishman's blade leaped out in a fast thrust. Hassan parried it and leaped back. Something hit him in the small of his back, and he felt his feet leave the deck as he toppled backwards.

Sir Stephen looked over the rail at the spot in the sea where Hassan had vanished. "Coward! he snapped. "Running off just as it was getting good."

Then he turned and headed back into the melee. But it was too late—the fight was over. Haroun and Ali had been clubbed down, and the mummy was hanging limply between two sailors.

Someone was pounding on Larry Levine's door.

"Larry! For Krissake, lemme in!" It was Little Joe.

Larry flung open the door and Joe, still swathed in gauze bandages, propelled himself through it. "Help! The place is full of mummies! Walking dead men all over the place!"

"What are you talking about?" Mr. Levine asked. "Did you get the jewels?"

"No," Joe confessed, "the box was empty. I threw it at a mummy, and then another one climbed out of the coffin. It—it—" Recalling the horror of the moment, Little Joe Manetti rolled up his eyes and keeled over in a dead faint.

"There is definitely something screwy here, O'Shaughnessy," said Levine. "If the jewels aren't there, they must be in the Captain's safe."

"It figures," agreed the Irishman. "Yep, it figures."

He bent over the postrate Manetti, grasped one arm in a hamlike hand and callously dragged the little man over to a bunk and heaved him in.

Larry Levine was checking the chambers in his .38 revolver. "Come, O'Shaughnessy; wake him up and get your Betsy. There is work to be done."

Dr. Armitage heard the rap at his door, but he did not immediately answer. His lips were effectively silenced by the hot, moist mouth of Lady Blessingame.

The knock came again, and Dr. Armitage disengaged himself. "Who is it?"

"Me. Leslie Bingham, Dr. Armitage," said a small, weak voice.

Armitage unlocked the door. "What is it, my boy? what gives, hey?" he said, beaming jovially. Then he took a closer look. "Good Gad,

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boy! You look horrible! What happened to you?"

Bingham stepped inside, smiled feebly at Lady Blessingame, and told his story.

"—and now," he finished, "I don't have any pants to wear." He had been holding his hands behind him, trying to keep the trousers together where the sword of Hassan had split them.

"Of course they apologized when they found out who you were?" Lady Blessingame asked.

"Well, yes." Leslie Bingham felt a little embarrassed, but he could hardly keep his eyes off the lush figure of Lady Blessingame.

"No trousers?" said Dr. Armitage. "Where are your others?"

"Being cleaned," said Bingham, unhappily. "I can't get them for an hour yet. May I borrow yours?"

"Mine are in the cleaners, too. Hmmm. I'll tell you what; Muriel—" He gestured at Lady Blessingame. "—and I are going for a dip in the ship's pool. You can wear the pants I have on."

"For a *swim?*" Bingham looked astonished. "Dr. Armitage, don't you care *anything* about the jewels and the mummy?"

Dr. Armitage was busily removing his trousers. "*Tush,* my dear boy; what do I care for such things when I have Muriel?"

Bingham groaned.

Five minutes later, Bingham, nattily clad in Armitage's trousers, stepped out on the deck. The trousers were a good fit—he and Armitage were about the same general build—but there was s o m e t h i n g uncomfortably banging against his thigh at every step.

He reached into his pocket to see what the strange object could be, and pulled out the scarab that had fallen from the Belt of Osiris.

He looked at it curiously for a moment, shrugged, and dropped it back in the pocket. Dr. Armitage was probably keeping it there for some fairly good r e a s o n, he thought. Or was he? Armitage was acting very peculiar —*very* peculiar.

The salt breeze hit him as he stepped outside. He paused for a moment, and smiled. He felt different, somehow. Was it the fresh air? No, that wasn't it. It was something else, some feeling of vitality and power that he had never known before.

New thoughts ran through his head. *Armitage has the*

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right idea, letting everything go by like that. He's got a pretty woman, and isn't that all that really matters?

Bingham glanced around, new determination in his mild eyes. "Where's Linda?" he demanded out loud. "Has anyone seen Linda Armitage?"

"Not lately," said a voice behind him.

He turned and saw the blonde, curvacious form of Adelaide Dorensen. She had been swimming too, aparently. Beads of water gleamed brightly on her tanned body.

"Hello," he said, staring at her as if he had never seen a woman before. At that moment, Adelaide Dorensen was the most desirable creature that walked the Earth, in Leslie Bingham's eyes.

"You're Dr. Bingham, aren't you?"

"That's right."

"I almost didn't recognize you," she said, undulating toward him. "You look so—*different,* somehow. So *vibrant.*"

Bingham stepped closer to her and felt her warm body against his. All thoughts of Linda vanished swiftly and permanently from his mind.

In his cabin, Captain Boggs was busily making entries in the log when a loud triple-knock at the door interrupted him. He looked up, annoyed at having visitors while he was trying to get the details of the entire complicated mishmosh of the past day down on paper. Mummies that wouldn't stay put, stolen jewels, dried-up archaeologists suddenly turning into lady-killers—Captain Boggs shook his head wearily and got up to answer the door.

He opened it and jumped back. A figure stood there, wrapped in the by-now familiar gauze vestments of a mummy. Only there was a coldly gleaming .38 revolver in the mummy's hand this time.

"Good morning, Captain," the mummy said, in the unmistakable accents of Larry Levine. "May we come in?"

Boggs backed away and allowed the mummy to enter. Behind him marched two other gauze-clad figures. Manetti and O'Shoughnessy, no doubt. They carried guns too. One of them turned to cover the doorway, and the other two faced the Captain.

"What do you want?" Boggs demanded.

"My treasure," the first mummy said in a sepulchral voice. "I demand my treasure."

"What kind of nonsense is

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this, Levine?" Boggs said impatiently. "Why the masquerade? I can recognize your accent a knot away."

"All right, then, Captain. I won't play games. I know you've got that Egyptian treasure locked up here someplace, and I want you to hand it over—fast."

"Suppose I don't?"

"Suppose you do," Levine said, gesturing with the .38. He extended a hand, gauze-wrapped palm upward. "Hand it over."

Captain Boggs scowled. He didn't want to do it—it was robbery on the high seas—but there wasn't any way of arguing with a trio of .38s. He turned and began to fumble with the ship's safe.

A few moments of twisting and the tumblers fell into place. The safe door swung open, and Boggs reached down to haul out the jewels. Hesitatingly he complied.

"You needn't bother doing that, Captain," said a new voice. "Everything is quite under control."

Boggs glanced over his shoulder and saw Levine still standing with one hand outstretched, and behind him his two henchmen maintained their positions. A fourth figure was moving swiftly among them, collecting the guns that hung from their nerveless fingers.

"What's this, Ahnku?"

The beady-eyed little man smiled apologetically. "A little well-timed sorcery, *mon capitain*. Under the circumstances I couldn't see what else to do. These jewels have been involved in enough sacrilege, without adding the ignominy of an armed robbery."

"What did you do to them?" Boggs asked.

"Merely persuaded them to stand still. They'll remain like statues until the time comes to hand them to the proper authorities."

"You mean—"

Boggs didn't get a chance to finish the sentence. The cabin door flew open and Avery Armitage came rushing in, nearly bowling over the unseeing figure of Lou Manetti as he did so.

Armitage looked like a man who had awakened after a long slumber and suddenly discovered that doomsday had come in the interval.

"What's been happening on this ship?" he demanded. "Where's the Belt of Osiris? Where's the mummy?"

He stopped, aghast, and looked at the three mute figures in various postures here

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and there in the Captain's cabin.

"Who are these?" he asked in a subdued voiec.

"A trio of cheap gangsters," Boggs explained. "They've been causing all the trouble around here, dressing up as mummies. They're the ones who kept frightening passengers, who murdered that other fake mummy in the hold, who stole your precious Belt—"

"Where's the Belt?" Armitage said. "Where *is* it?"

"We'll find it when we search their cabin, undoubtedly," said Boggs.

"Oh, no we won't. They don't have the Belt at all!"

Armitage turned and saw his daughter appear, leading the towering figure of Muhammid ibn Abdul by one hand.

"Linda! Where have you been all this time?"

"I've been around, Daddy. But I could ask *you* the same question!"

Armitage passed a hand wearily in front of his eyes. "I've—I've—it's hard to say, dear. But how do you know these three men don't have the Belt?"

"Because *I* do," Muhammid said, in his vibrant, deep voice. "I've had it all along."

"*You?*"

"Yes," Linda said proudly. "This gentleman, Daddy, happens to be King Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen the Third!"

Dr. Armitage blinked confusedly. "But that's ridiculous, my dear! Khama-Ptah-hor-Amen has been dead for thousands of years!"

Ahnku the Ancient stepped forward. "Not so, Dr. Armitage. He was put into suspended animation by his enemies. Only the Belt of Osiris could revive him, but that, too, was buried with him in the secret tomb. I have searched for my master for many centuries, and I am grateful that you found him, Dr. Armitage."

"Rubbish!" snorted Captain Boggs. "I saw you bring Muhammid ibn Abdul on board myself!"

"No, Captain," said the royal Egyptian himself. "My faithful Ahnku brought a dummy aboard in a wheelchair. Then he went below to revive me."

"How did he get in the strong room?"

"Ahnku has his ways," smiled the King.

"And the Belt of Osiris brought you back to life?" Dr. Armitage asked.

"Yes," said the King. "It is truly a marvelous talisman.

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During the hundreds of decades of my entombment, it has faithfully recorded all the incidents of history and thus I know the languages of today; they were transmitted to me the instant I awoke, impressed indelibly on my brain."

Linda chuckled. "It was Khama who scared everyone last night. He was still a little groggy from sleep."

"I dare say," muttered the Captain.

"There is just one thing," said the King. He took the belt out of his pocket. "I don't need to wear this any more, Ahnku tells me. But look; there is a part of the belt missing. It isn't very important—to me, at least, but the amethyst scarab is gone. It is the talisman which grants eternal virility and desirability. It makes one quite a lover, in fact."

Dr. Armitage clapped his hand to his head. "Great Heavens! Then *that's* why I was so—I mean—all I could think about was—er—" He sputtered off in confusion.

"Then you aren't carrying it any more?" Linda asked.

"No. It was in my other trousers. And I—I gave them to Dr. Bingham!"

"That's true," said a voice from the door. It was Leslie Bingham, standing there with his arm around the waist of the voluptuous Adelaide Dorensen.

"Well, give it to His Majesty, then; it's rightfully his!"

"It's down in my cabin," Bingham confessed.

"He really doesn't need it," Adelaide said. "All he needed was something to get him started and take away his shyness." She s n i c k e r e d. "That scarab sure did the trick."

"And all aboard my ship," mumbled Captain Boggs. "It's a good thing this is the *Queen Victoria,* and not the *Queen Elizabeth;* the Virgin Queen might have enjoyed it—Victoria is properly shocked." He turned to Dr. Armitage. "You needn't worry about that band of Egyptian fanatics, by the way. One of them, dressed up like a mummy, is dead; one fell overboard; the other two are locked up in the brig. And with these three brighters out of the picture, I think the rest of the trip will be uneventful."

"*I* don't," said Bingham. He winked at Adelaide. "I understand a captain can marry couples on the high seas."

"Well, yes," said Captain Boggs.

"Good!" Linda Armitage

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said. "We'll make it a double ceremony!"

King Kha m a-Ptah-hor-Amen frowned. "That's all very well, but being an Egyptian king is not a very profitable occupation these days—in fact, kinging isn't at all what it used to be. Unfortunately, it's the only profession I know. I'll have to sell my jewels and learn a trade."

Dr. Armitage smiled. "Don't worry about that, my boy. Didn't you say the Belt had recorded all of history since your — ah — pseudo-death?"

"Yes," said the King.

"Very well, then; I can guarantee that all that knowledge will not be allowed to go to waste. I think we can find a place for you at Miskatonic University. We may have to throw Dr. Weaver out of the history department, but that won't be much of a loss."

"Yes, dear," said Linda, "and you can go on lecture tours! Why, you'll make plenty of money!"

His Majesty beamed broadly. "In that case, Captain, I think we may as well proceed."

Linda chuckled softly. "I'll have to get used to being called Daddy, I guess."

"Why?" asked the King.

"The kids will call you Mummy, won't they?"

THE END

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(*Continued from second cover*)

He got the first job he applied for, and probably did not think it at all remarkable—an assistant art director's post here at Ziff Davis. Leo Summers was art director then and Howard Browne was editor of the Fiction Group where Ed was assigned. He never stopped learning, having a quaint idea shared by greats in many fields that school is but a springboard and that true knowledge is gained only after graduation exercises. No job was too rough for Ed; no deadline too tight; and when he didn't know something he was never too bashful to ask. Thus, a lot of Summer's knowledge became his knowledge—also a lot of everyone else's.

Prior to coming to work at Ziff-Davis, Ed had submitted a full-length oil painting on canvas, done during his art course. It impressed both Leo Summers and Howard Browne. It was bought for cover use and became the illustration for Ivar Jorgensen's *Rest In Agony*. Ed later presented the original to Ivar and it is now one of the latter's prized possessions.

So Howard Browne watched Valigursky's work very closely and one day when he thought the time was right, called him in and said, "Ed, my boy—you're fired." Val's jaw dropped. He got it back up and asked, "Hasn't my work been satisfactory?"

Howard answered, "It will be impossible to replace you."

"Then why the sack?"

"Because you're hurting yourself here. This job is a blind alley so far as you're concerned. So I'm letting you go, but I want you to do our covers."

Ed was neither grateful nor happy at this offer. He asked, "How come? I've only done one cover. What makes you think I could satisfy you?"

"Satisfying me is impossible," Browne answered. "Personally, I like the *Mona Lisa*. It's the readers you have to worry about. They're the folks that count."

"What if they like the *Mona Lisa* too?" Ed inquired with marked gloom.

"Maybe they do, but not on the cover of *Amazing Stories*" Browne said. "So collect your severance pay and go home and get to work."

Ed picked up his check and went home and he's been working ever since. And with such success it's hard to believe, over the years, that he ever stops—even for lunch. He long ago vindicated Howard Browne's faith in a young assistant art director—not only at Ziff-Davis but in many other markets, because his fine covers for *Amazing Stories*, *Fantastic*, and for *Dream World*—a new magazine we are launching shortly—are but a small part of his overall production.

Besides working for other Ziff-Davis magazines, he fills regular assignments with other publishers and often rejects orders he has no time to fill.

But he always has time for the Z-D fiction group because—glory be!—we found him first.

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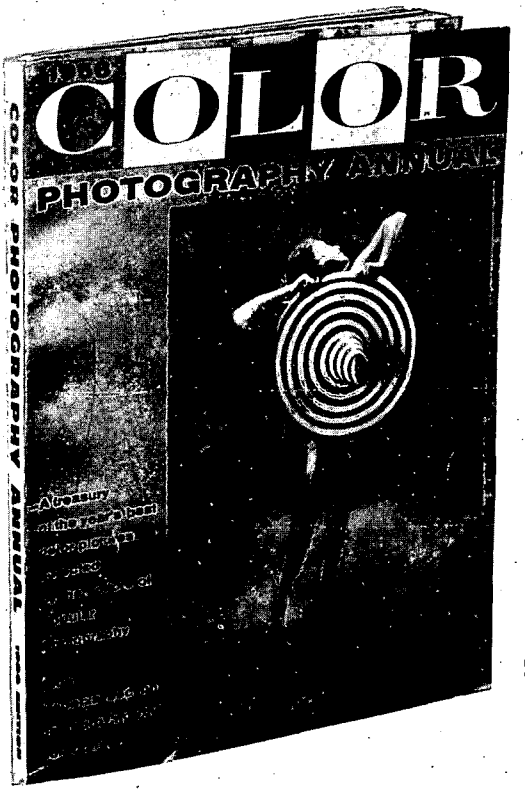

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